

ART AND THE CHILD

MARION RICHARDSON



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# ART & THE CHILD

By

MARION RICHARDSON

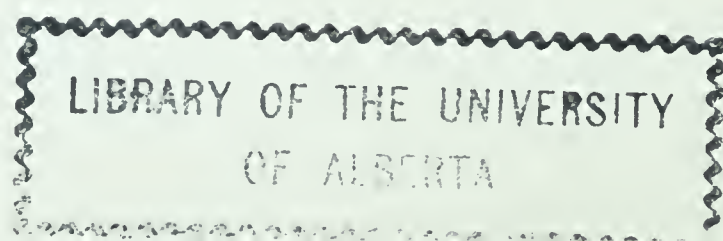
With an Introduction by

SIR KENNETH CLARK

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## DEDICATION

This book does not belong to me.  
I give it, as the only thing I can give,  
to you who shared my work and  
made it all a joy. Were I to write a  
list of so great a company, it would  
be longer than the book itself.

M. R.

DUDLEY

*November 11th, 1946*



## INTRODUCTION

THE pages that follow tell, with the simplicity of a saint, the story of a great reform in education. Revolutions, we are told, are never the work of a single individual: the ground is prepared, there are precursors and unknown fellow-workers. No doubt Marion Richardson's revolution was part of the philosophic movement which revealed the art of primitive peoples and found expression in Croce's *Æsthetic*. Her aims, if not her method, had been pursued by Professor Cizek in Vienna, and, as she herself tells us, artists had already become aware of the vivid, expressive painting which children could produce if allowed to work in their own ways. Still, it was Marion Richardson alone who recognised that this power of imaginative expression could be developed in almost every child as part of his education, and, thanks to her vision and tenacity, this discovery did not remain a mere experiment, an educational freak, but spread throughout this country, Canada, and America.

After twenty years we have grown used to seeing beauty in the work of children. We find nothing surprising in the fact that some of the British Council's most popular exhibits are collections of children's drawings, which have been shown with success in North and South America, Africa, and Australia, as well as many European countries. We may even feel the symptoms of a reaction, an impatience with felicities of line and colour achieved at so little cost. Is art, then, purely

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an instinctive activity? Is all the science of representation accumulated during the last five hundred years a waste of time? Is there really no point in growing up? Miss Richardson recognised these difficulties and dealt with them with her usual good sense. She was particularly attentive to the problem of the older child, and happy when she could see a way of preserving some part of the image-making faculty in maturity. She placed, it is true, great value on the faculty of vision, and perhaps she sometimes underestimated the added richness which comes from the discipline of representation. But we must remember that she was comparing her children's pictures with the heart-breaking delineations of bathroom taps and umbrellas which had represented art in the old education, and she never claimed that they were of the same quality as works by great artists, simply that they were of the same kind, which the bathroom taps were not.

However, the ultimate artistic value of children's drawings was not her chief concern. She was a teacher whose aim was the self-realisation of her pupils; and her success was due to the fact that she not only recognised the value of the child's vision, but contrived the most ingenious ways of projecting and focussing it. I have heard it said that children's drawings gain in interest in proportion as their teachers leave them completely alone. This is not borne out by experience, and was not Miss Richardson's way. She found that both vision and technique needed direction, and as we read her account of how this was achieved, we are enchanted by the sympathy with which her pupils were first hypnotised into seeing the subject, and then given an appetite for the right materials. I use the word hypnotised half seriously, for the extraordinary vividness with which her pupils realised her descriptions did seem to involve some kind of telepathic suggestion. Miss Richardson recognised this herself when she says "as I talked some-



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thing passed between us, and whatever possessed for me the genuine picture quality had a sort of incandescence which I could communicate." It is particularly evident in those exercises when she describes an existing picture, like Velasquez's "Serving-Maid," which the children could not have seen, but which they contrived to reproduce with a similarity of spirit and design most disturbing to the sceptic.

To read these descriptions as she wrote them twenty years after they were given is to realise that Miss Richardson was a very remarkable artist who, for some mysterious reason, could only express herself through her influence on others. It was this deflected creative power which was the mainspring of her teaching. But in addition to this she was wonderfully skilful in making the children take an interest in the materials and craft of painting. What could be more ingenious, for example, than to take away all their paints and tell them to contrive materials of their own, so that after an experiment with beetroot juice and curry powder they might take fresh delight in the beauties of rose madder and burnt sienna? This element of delight runs through all her teaching, and is in the greatest possible contrast to the drabness of the average art school. She realised that skill is born of delight—to draw something which you do not love is to lose half your skill. Children cannot be expected to take delight in the traditional subjects of the academic curriculum. Even when it was necessary for her pupils to draw the objects favoured by the official examiners, she contrived to make them exciting by putting them into a sort of toy theatre; as a result, her pupils passed their examinations with unusual speed and ability.

One other point in Miss Richardson's teaching is worth emphasising. Although she did so much to develop the children's imagination, she always discouraged the feeble fantasies, the shallow day-dream

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pictures into which children so easily subside. She saw to it that all their images should be taken from the life they knew, and she was able to do this because she herself could see beauty in the "little shops, market stalls, chimney-stacks, watchmen's huts, eating-houses, slag heaps, canal barges, pit mounds, and waste ground." She had a special sympathy for subjects of this kind. After her description of the two old men in the Lamb and Flag, she says, "I remembered that a few days before I had tried in vain to make a picture of two very elegant ladies having tea in a café. How could it be that these old men were so much more beautiful than the beautiful ladies? That is a secret." Well, she could have found one answer to the secret in Wordsworth's preface to *Poems and Lyrical Ballads*, and in the letters of Constable. But beyond this, the list of subjects, culminating in "waste ground," tells us something about Miss Richardson which was all-important in her teaching: she had the gift of universal love. This sublime gift, for which so many poets and artists have striven in vain, is only to be achieved through a humility seldom allied with creative gifts. Perhaps in Miss Richardson the very fact that she could not create directly, but only through the medium of a child's imagination, helped to preserve the beautiful humility which shines through every word of her book. It is not for us to say who is, or is not, a saint; but, as I read the pages that follow, I know that I am in the company of one who has had an unusually direct and pure revelation of the divine spirit; and I believe that I recognise the same tone of voice which I hear in the dialogues of St. Catherine of Siena.

K. C.



# I

## EARLY DAYS AS STUDENT AND TEACHER

WHEN I was a child I possessed a certain skill in drawing ; and as I belonged to a big family, and we had grown poor, the possibility of my winning a scholarship in art was one that we could not afford to overlook. I was only sixteen when I went to the Birmingham School of Art to sit for the entrance examination which decided all awards. How well I remember the crab's claw which was part of our test ! As I drew it the horrid thing seemed to be clutching me, and, though feeling obliged to do my very best, I hoped with all my heart that this best would not be good enough to win a scholar's place. I did not want to leave school, and had no interest in learning to draw. But, alas, the crab had caught me. The offer of four years' training as a teacher could not be refused, and that autumn I became an art student.

As time went on, however, I grew more or less reconciled to the thought of my career, and indeed found great happiness in some of my work. But all through my training, generous and enlightened though much of it was, I was dimly aware of conflicts and questionings. My powers of representation steadily increased ; but to what end ? I took examinations and my scholarships were renewed ; but I felt that I was far from understanding the meaning of art, and more and more doubtful of what I should have to give to the children whom I should have to teach. It could not be that the mere ability to copy crabs' claws,

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bathroom taps, umbrellas, ivy leaves, or even the casts from the antique to which these elementary things were the prelude, constituted art.

It was not until I reached a stage senior enough to entitle me to a place in the class taken by the headmaster, Mr. Catterson Smith, that I began to see my way. He won me over as a disciple by teaching us to rely on our visual powers rather than our skill of hand, and never to begin a drawing until we had a clear image of the subject. These subjects—many of which I seem to think had a puzzle quality about them—were generally presented to us as lantern slides, of which he had a most fascinating collection. The slide was shown for a few moments and then withdrawn: we closed our eyes and, keeping them closed, quickly outlined the picture. This “shut-eye” drawing was perhaps Mr. Catterson Smith’s greatest contribution to art education. It was a wonderful means of clarifying and impressing the image and of keeping it before us while we set to work with open eyes.

Nor was that all. We were encouraged to use these devices as material for ideas of our own, to look to mental imagery as the source of ideas and let it lead us where it would. The fact that in later years, to quote Mr. Catterson Smith’s own description of my work, I struck out on different lines in no way detracts from my sense of loyalty and gratitude to my master.

Before the end of my final year at Birmingham I was appointed art mistress at the Dudley Girls’ High School. I was only nineteen, and I wore a black veil for the interview in the hope of hiding my youth; but young though I was, I was eager to hand on as well as I possibly could the teaching I now professed.

But I had no lantern in the studio at Dudley, and my means of providing large and suitable illustrations were very limited indeed. One day I decided to try giving the children a word picture. I asked them



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to shut their eyes while they listened to a description of a little local street, lit by the moon, as I had myself seen and painted it a short while before. I was surprised and delighted with the results. No doubt the fact that I had seen the subject as a picture gave colour and point to my words and reduced them to what was artistically significant. From this moment the work had a new quality. Whereas before it had been little more than the reproduction of something photographed by the physical eye, it now had an original and inner quality. It haunted me. I could not forget it, and I felt instinctively that in the understanding of it I should find a solution of problems that had most perplexed me in the past.

In these early days I had to mark all the drawings, and my scale of values was upset. I found, almost against my will and for reasons I did not understand, that quite crude drawings which possessed this new quality seemed better than those that were relatively skilled. In a vague, dark way I began to see that this thing we had stumbled upon, as it were almost by chance, was art, not drawing; something as distinct and special and precious as love itself, and as natural. I could free it, but I could not teach it; and my whole purpose was now directed to this end, as I set out to learn with and from the children.

One of the first things I discovered was that this new thing that interested me so deeply had little or nothing to do with beauty as I had hitherto understood it. No one, I think, could ever regard Dudley as a beautiful place, and yet its strange ups and downs, its sudden lights and sunken pools, stirred me as nothing had before; and once I began to use the local scene, given in the form of a word picture, my problem was not to find, but to choose from a wealth of subjects that flooded my mind. Everywhere I looked, the scene fell into a picture—fell into a kind of harmony, a music of shapes. I used to ask the children what it was

that made a picture. "When everything rhymes" was one answer, and one which I shall never forget.

My whole purpose was now directed, as I have said, to identifying this essential quality, this pearl of great price, which the children had revealed to me. During my first summer holiday something happened which influenced me profoundly. It was August, and I was in London with my mother. We were on our way from a visit to Burlington House when we passed the Grafton Galleries, where the first Post-Impressionist Exhibition was being held. The day was hot, and through the open door I could see into the vestibule. It was hung with pictures which in some strange way were familiar and yet new to me. I had no choice but to go in.

Impertinent and fantastic though the idea may seem, I can only say that to me a common denominator was evident between the children's infinitely humble intimations of artistic experience and the mighty statements of these great modern masters. It was an odd experience, and one that is almost impossible to put into words. In the happiest of the children's work I had learned to recognise a vital something; but with my limited knowledge of art I had not, up till then, been fully conscious of having seen it elsewhere. Now, for the first time, it blazed at me; and it seemed that I need never again mistake the sham for the real in art. I have not, however, for fear of being misunderstood, ever spoken of this experience before now.

The discovery that my teaching could fire and free something which would otherwise be fortuitous gave new purpose and inspiration to my next term's work. As I have said, I knew that the children did their best work when painting from a mental image; this was for most both rich and fertile, but some were unable to select from a shifting, kaleidoscopic inward store. I was myself a natural visualiser and found

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that the children were interested in descriptions of my own imagery; that as I talked something passed between us, and that whatever possessed for me the genuine picture quality had a sort of incandescence which I could communicate.

I must not give the impression that the children's subjects were never self-chosen or seen at first hand. What I hoped for, and I know in part achieved, was to give the children complete confidence in their inner vision as the seeing eye, so that it would come to colour and control their whole habit of looking. They would then see pictures everywhere, in poor, plain places as well as lovely ones: in fried-fish and other little shops, market stalls, chimney stacks, watchmen's huts, eating-houses, slag-heaps, salt carts, cinderbanks, canal barges, pit mounds, and waste grounds.

We used to set out on what we called a beauty hunt to some such spot, looked at a thousand times before but never seen at all. We came home only when each for herself had found in it the rhyming shapes of a song. I wish I could show you some of the children's drawings, but as I cannot manage this, let me recall one of the scenes and try to make it rhyme for you. As I stood waiting for a tram one evening I saw that the little greengrocer's shop on the far side of the road was lovely as a picture (26). It was getting dark and beginning to rain, and the shopkeeper had let down his awning to keep the pavement dry. This was important, because most of his goods were arranged on the outside of the shop in a neat and lovely display of boxes and bags. On the left was the door (at this moment the little owner himself standing at it) through which you went if you wanted to buy the more precious things, such as grapes, pineapples, peaches, and flowers. In my eyeful (this was my way of describing the range of the picture) I saw right up to the roof of the house, and even a strip of the violet-blue sky above.



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I saw, too, a part of the shop on the right, next door, and the whole of the dark, mysterious archway on the left of the greengrocer's, which led to his yard at the back. Let us look now at the windows upstairs. These were all dark, except for one in which there burned a lovely little light. I felt sure that the greengrocer's wife was in that room, probably mending his socks. Now look to the right; the blinds here are drawn and the shop shut—all dark and quiet. The pavement is the moving and lively part of the picture. People hurry to and fro. Sometimes they stop, put down their umbrellas and make a purchase. You will not find a single colour for this picture ready-made in your paint-box. The colours are all deep and strange, and you will have to mix them.

My choice of dark, dimly-lighted subjects was deliberate. In full daylight it is difficult to see the unity and coherence of things; each separate object seems to detach itself and call, "Look at me, look at me, I am here." All things are one by twilight. Just occasionally we let a poem give us our picture. One of the loveliest of all was Masefield's "Twilight":

*"Twilight it is, and the far woods are dim, and the rooks cry and call.  
Down in the valley the lamps, and the mist, and a star over all,  
There by the rick, where they thresh, is the drone at an end,  
Twilight it is, and I travel the road with my friend."*

While I gave the description the children sat round, generally on the floor. This made it possible for me to speak quietly and naturally while they listened with their eyes shut. As soon as they had seen their idea, they left the circle. I well remember the air of confidence with which they got up and went to their places, taking with them the paper they needed. Every morning I cut and put out piles of paper which offered a wide choice of size and shape. They used water-colour,

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but used it freely to match as nearly as possible the colour and texture of the mental image.

How different it all was from the orthodox technique which these children had learned before in imitation of adult conventional art. They were now developing an art of their own, vital enough to discover its own means of expression. What was the use of showing them how to shade a top-hat or shape an umbrella, when their need was to paint an individual and original vision? Examinations such as the School Certificate still demanded the old skill and acknowledged no other; but I found that I could afford to postpone all thought of this until the year of the examination itself. In preparing for this, as everyone knows, the pupils learned how to imitate as nearly as possible the outward and physical appearance of things. Given the ability to do this, it was no doubt assumed that they would one day have the power to paint something of their own. The fact is that not one in a hundred ever dreamt of doing so. The language was not theirs, so that even if they could speak it they would say nothing. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." But not before.

## II

### DIFFICULTIES AND THEIR SOLUTION

LOOKING back over the years when I was teaching, I ask myself what it was that made the work so worthwhile and so happy both for the children and for me. The previous chapter has thrown some light on the question. Let us continue the story in the hope of coming nearer to finding the answer. Among the very best of my pupils were children who could succeed at nothing else but art. I am not saying that it was their limited intellectual powers that made artists of them, but the fact remained that the studio now offered opportunities to everyone, not just to a gifted few. That was indeed a change.

Even more welcome and more significant was the fact that rebellious and frustrated children found peace when they painted. Over and over again I saw an ugly mood just melt away before the magic of a mind-picture and its expression. Nor did the children look for marks of praise or any reward other than the work itself.

*“And only the Master shall praise us, and only the Master shall blame;  
And no one shall work for money, and no one shall work for fame,  
But each for the joy of the working, and each, in his separate star,  
Shall draw the Thing as he sees It for the God of Things as They Are!”*

—KIPLING.

It must not be thought that all the children worked from my description. If it failed to give them an image, they never pretended to



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have one or attempted to work from something contrived or made up. There were always a few who said, "I cannot see what you have given us, but I see another picture." Whatever this other picture was, I accepted it gratefully. These spontaneous visions were sometimes no more than a curious colour, a vague pattern, or just a fragment. But even if the idea itself was artistically worthless, the effort of expressing it was never so.

In searching for the painted interpretation of the image the children explored to the utmost the technical resources of their materials, and gained experience which would stand them in good stead when a complete idea came along. No matter how difficult and subtle the problem, they worked with much greater confidence and security when the inner eye directed them than when they were depending upon the vision of the physical eye.

How glad I was when the children began to ask for paper to take home to use when pictures came to them there. I knew then that the habit of waiting and watching for mind-pictures was forming, and how eagerly I looked forward to seeing these independent efforts. Every morning I found little homework offerings on my table. More often than not these were unsigned; but what the children had painted was so characteristic of themselves that their names nearly always came to me as soon as I saw the work. Kathleen's were all grey and gold with wheel-like shapes one upon another. "They seem to shine," she would say, and I had to give her a mussel shell with real gold leaf. Marjorie saw ladders; Helen birds, and lovely little creatures which she painted in rich dark colour, using her water-colour as though it were oil rather than water-colour. Pamela saw faces and people. I still have one of her drawings with this written underneath, "These small heads flashed into my mind last night when I was doing my Arithmetic."

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“We are such stuff as dreams are made on.” What does it all mean? To the psychologist one thing, to another something else, to the plain practical workaday man just nothing at all. And to me? A peep into the children’s minds, and a precious link with them; for I do not remember a time when images were not a part of my own mental life. Sir Francis Galton has given us an illuminating account of his researches into the subject in his book, *Enquiry into Human Faculty*. Over and over again he found that those he questioned were afraid, or ashamed, to admit that they saw mind pictures; because they believed their experiences to be abnormal. I was thankful that the children should be spared such fear and that through painting their images they should turn them to practical account. The phantasy that finds no expression can have the most damaging results. Even when what my pupils saw was no more than a wish fulfilment, a day-dream or an after-image such as a bright light leaves on the retina, such things provided, as I have said, an incentive to experiment and a never-ending source of independent homework.

But in class the children turned to me for subjects. They welcomed an extension of their own experience. It was not that they wanted to see with my eyes, but that, through a word picture, they could reach towards the order, coherence, and unity that belong to art. This was our means of co-operating, with me as stage-manager. Was the children’s work pale and weak in colour, then I must show the mind’s eye something deep and strong.

For example, there is not a single pretty colour in this picture and no black and no white. And yet, when I saw it, I longed to get my paint-box because of all the strange half-way shades that I felt I had never seen before. I wanted to find how to match them: “It is evening and we are looking at a lighted street lamp. Standing underneath it are

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three old men. The one in the centre seems to be telling the other two a story. There are great grey, streaky shadows on the pavement.”

Or were the children using their colours in dull flat washes? Then we must find a picture that is full of lovely spangled surfaces and lacy textures. Think of the speckles on a snake-skin, the fleckings on a feather, the shading of the sky at sunset, the wavy lines in water (and for that matter in wood), all the jewelled and gemmed and patched and patterned and printed things in the world that need double painting, putting first one colour then writing across it with another. Here is a picture that is full of this play and waiting to be painted; but first listen to “Pied Beauty,” by Gerard Manley Hopkins:

*Glory be to GOD for dappled things—  
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;  
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;  
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls ; finches' wings;  
Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plough;  
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.  
All things counter, original, spare, strange;  
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)  
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;  
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:  
Praise him.*

“Standing on a little hall-table is a basket with a high handle (27). It is made of open wicker-work and is filled with lovely mixed leaves and flowers that have faces. Do not think of any special or familiar flowers, try to make the ones you paint flowerlike rather than like particular flowers. The basket has a label on it and is going to someone who is ill. It is big enough to fill our paper except for a little border all round.



and in this border we see the patterned wall behind. It has criss-cross stripes and dark little dabs in the spaces. Leaning against the wall behind the basket is a tiny tray, inlaid with mother-of-pearl."

Or were the drawings empty, with small things scattered over a field of background—pepper-pot pictures as the children came to call them, because they looked as though everything had been sprinkled about? Then our pictures must be full of lovely overlapping shapes, linked or touching each other. Everything looks large because I am very near to this picture: "Two ladies, one going up the street, the other down, have stopped to talk. Both are pushing prams; but I cannot see the whole of either pram, for one is in front of the other and partly hiding it. The near one has a little girl of about three in it, and parcels as well. The far one has the hood up. Perhaps a tiny baby is sleeping there. The mothers' heads go right up to the top of the paper and their feet reach nearly to the bottom." Everything seems to belong together in a beautiful way; nothing is blank.

Or are the children using a kind of shorthand formula in their drawing? A dot for an eye, a slit for a mouth, and so on. Let us look at a face, at a face we love, father's face or mother's face. As we draw the eyes let us say to ourselves, "Eyes that see." They are looking at us now; there is the little black bit in the middle, then the coloured ring round it, then white, then the part that comes down when we go to sleep. It is up now, of course. And don't forget the lashes. Now look at the mouth. It must open and shut to be able to eat and to kiss. It will never do just to put a line for this. How can we make a nose, a neck, hair—hair that grows on the head? What a wonderfully full picture it can be with just one face. Draw a fine frame for it and try. When we had done mother's and father's faces we went on to lots of other portraits; myself (32), Santa Claus, soldiers and sailors, stokers and sweeps;

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to Indians, Africans, Esquimaux, cowboys and costers, jockeys and clowns, dwarfs and giants, saints and angels, kings and queens.

Or are the children (it will be the older ones) losing faith in the value of their own work because it seems to them crude and clumsy? Skill impresses them. It is little wonder that they should fall in love with the smart or pretty-pretty, and want to imitate it, when they live in a world of slick advertisements and second-rate illustrations. And merely to condemn what the children admire will only create a barrier of misunderstanding. The wise teacher will never seem superior. She will be content to let these things spend themselves, and meanwhile have their place and day. Her own unfeigned delight in every honest effort at expression will do much to reassure them of its worth. In the drawing lesson she will find her solution when she succeeds in transporting the children completely out of the shallows of frail fancy, out of the world of skating girls and crinolined ladies, of hollyhock borders and pixies and toadstools, galleons and dragons and all the ready-made make-shifts for art, into a robust world of reality and illumination.

She will have anticipated this adolescent stage by surrounding the children, as far as possible, with reproductions of great pictures of all sorts. In this good company taste will have had the opportunity of developing unconsciously, and can prove an armour of defence. The children may not yet understand or even care for what is fine, but, as a pupil once said to me, "It has an expression on its face." She recognised it. This expression is the look of sincerity. In its own infinitely humble way, the children's work has it too, and they can dimly feel it as a bond and common denominator, the thing that makes their own efforts more worth while than anything borrowed or second-hand.

The pictures most likely to help and interest the children may be of subjects, in themselves prosaic, which only a very great artist



could find beautiful. Perhaps a still-life group of pots and pans such as Cézanne's blue jar or, though I doubt if it is reproduced, a Velasquez such as "The Serving-Maid," which is just someone washing up, of all things in the world. And it is everyday subjects of this sort that we shall do well to give the children themselves (14, 15, 16).

Let us think of a few. One autumn afternoon my brother and I were in the country together and stopped at the Lamb and Flag to get tea. We were shown into a homely little parlour and, hungry though I was, as my eyes got used to the dim light I wanted my pencil even more than my meal. There was a picture just asking to be painted, or, if I knew how, to be modelled or carved. In the far corner of the room two old men were playing cards. Something in the solid, shapely simplicity of it all: the stools on which they were sitting, the little table with a dark bottle and two tumblers on it, the old sheep-dog asleep at his master's feet, and above all the players themselves, made me think that I was looking at some statue. I remembered that, a few days before, I had tried in vain to make a picture of two very elegant ladies having tea in a café. How could it be that these old men were so much more beautiful than the beautiful ladies? That is a secret. All I know is that my picture of them succeeded while the one of the ladies failed.

And here is another: "I was sitting in the corner of a railway carriage. The lady opposite to me had her eyes shut and must have been almost asleep. I was glad, for I could stare at her without seeming to be rude. She was not beautiful, not even good-looking, but she was lovely as a picture. She was so near to me that her head must go right up to the top of my paper and I cannot see her feet at all—the bottom edge ends at her lap. This is piled with parcels. You remember the little pad underneath the window in a railway carriage? Her right elbow rests on this and her hand holds her head as an egg-cup holds an egg. I can



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feel how heavy it is. I like the way in which her sleeve has slipped up. Her other hand hangs across the parcels. How is she dressed? Her hat has a bow at the side and the brim turns back from her face. She cares nothing for fashion. Round her neck, but thrown back, is a brown fur. The coat, made of a dark speckly tweed, is open and shows us a patterned frock, purple printed in black, with bright little flowers here and there and a collar fastened with a big flat brooch. But it is her face I keep looking at, such firm big features, so many lines on her forehead."

I have tried to suggest some of the problems that pressed for attention, and directions in which I looked for solutions. In the earliest days of my teaching the best work was produced by the younger children. It was sad that this should be so. I remember that one of the things that pleased me most was that fine, strong work began to come from further and further up the school. First from the 13- and 14-year-olds, and then from the Fifth Form. In another year these girls would enter for the School Certificate. I could not bear that this should mean a reversal of all that we held most dear.

In those days reforms in art teaching which we now take as a matter of course were not reflected in external examinations. I had, therefore, to find a way of teaching such things as object drawing as a part of picture-making. The examination was often held at Christmas, and I recall some of the lessons we had on winter afternoons. How it was I am not quite sure, but in the half-dark room I happened upon the idea of lighting a group of models by an electric bicycle lamp. This cast long shadows which linked the objects and gave the group a most moving and dramatic quality. One of the girls said, when she saw it, that it looked like a little stage. This gave my mind a jolt. The bicycle lamp had lifted the objects out of the light of common day into a dream

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world of wonder and delight. I must now make the very most of the suggestions this offered. And so it was that I always covered the objects with a screen. As I drew it away it seemed like the stage curtain going up upon the scene.

For the next lesson I whitewashed a set of ninepins. What stately sentinels they made! Another model that we all enjoyed was five big basins set about on a sheet or mirror. Some of our most successful groups consisted of just five or six very familiar objects, all alike in size and shape: bottles, boxes, bowls, books, and so forth (11). By arranging them on or against a board, and below the level of the eye, the girls were given a sense of the near things overlapping and partly obscuring the further ones: a sense of the things moving up the stage and seeming to shrink as they did so.

This was a step towards solving the problem of perspective. It was a help to see in terms of solid shapes. These were so much more tangible than lines that vanished. Another great help was to hold out both hands, first as far as they would go; and then to bring one a few inches nearer, and pass it in front of the far one. The difference that these few inches made was unmistakable; a steep, sudden change in size, for the back one was blotted completely out of sight. The children now knew something of the pictorial possibilities of these simple, solid shapes. I told them about still-life paintings, particularly those in our public galleries, and they interpreted from my description all the reproductions I could find. Chardin's lovely little composition from the National Gallery was perfect for our purpose. The frame is slightly—say an inch—wider than it is high. A marble slab or shelf fills the lower part; but the marble shows only round the edge of the picture, for a crumpled sheet of newspaper is spread on it. Both are tempting things to paint: the marble mottled and veined, the paper delicately

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shaded with a tracery of finest brush-marks. In the middle of this paper stands a long-necked bottle which reflects the light from a window in a lovely way. On the left of the bottle slightly nearer to us is a squat little tumbler three-quarters full of a dark liquor, while on the right and overlapping it is a loaf of crusty bread, cottage shaped. A cook's knife with a black handle and pointed blade lies diagonally in front of the loaf; the point of the blade is between the bottle and the glass. The wall behind is dark, but not as dark as the bottle. All these things, so homely in themselves, seem in the picture to be more real than reality itself.

The very examination that I had once regarded as my greatest obstacle was now offering the solution of my greatest problem—the problem of the Senior School work. And did these girls succeed in their examinations? I am thankful to say that these lessons, so remote from the orthodox, in fact proved the best preparation I could give.

And just as I found that we could afford to venture in actual subject-matter, so it was with materials. We worked on paper double, and more than double, the size of the mere quarter imperial that the Delegacy provided. We used sugar paper with its soft, coarse surface, and kitchen paper as well as cartridge. We drew with charcoal and conté crayon as well as with hard H.B. pencils, and painted with powder and poster paint and, when we could afford them, with tempera and gouache. What a variety of delightful materials those plentiful pre-war days afforded: coloured waterproof and Indian inks, dyes and stains, pens and stilos, brushes of hog bristle or springy sable, tubes and palettes! Such things are indeed an incentive to painting, an invitation to the dance. And when the examination was over we went further and allowed ourselves the fun of joining the Juniors in making pictures



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with coloured and patterned paper (24), and scraps of satins and silks and stuffs of all sorts.

This was much more than a frivolous fancy; some of these rag pictures, mosaics in patchwork, were carried out with a lovely feeling for accent and contrast. They could, moreover, be constructed bit by bit, without coming to grief as a painting was apt to do. Through them I know that the children gained a fuller sense of the possibilities of their paints. And so they did when at times, disgusted with their clumsy childish ways, I took away everything they had, and told them to make materials of their own. How wonderful rose madder, raw and burnt sienna were, when they had had to make do with beetroot juice, curry powder, and gravy browning. And the ochres, umbers, and other earth colours, though they could often be found in local soils or even in the back garden, were very different things when prepared and refined by the colourman. After a few such excursions with ersatz, I got out and gave back the very best of everything we possessed.

But before we started a new picture, we carried out a kind of drill, tackling little technical problems one at a time and for their own sakes. Our first and humblest exercise was always a demonstration of the simple but fundamental fact that the primary colours, red, blue, and yellow, are like three friends of whom we may say that two is company and three is none. Let them play in pairs—red and blue or blue and yellow or yellow and red—and they will produce a new third friend, purple, green, or orange. But should the third primary try to join the game, it always results in a quarrel and the colour produced is grey. Let us think of an example. Red and blue make purple, but if we mix vermilion and Prussian blue they will give us grey. Why should this be? Because both the blue and the red contain yellow. In the same way light red, another yellow-red, when mixed with blue will be grey. I

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cannot here give in detail the many colour exercises that we found useful. Glazing one colour upon another called for great delicacy of touch and a sense of timing. These things, engaging enough in themselves, were far less exacting than our pictures, and provided a necessary relaxation. Nobody need now waste time even when ideas failed and inspiration fled.

### III

#### FIRST EXHIBITIONS

I HAD now been in Dudley for some years (a generation of children had passed through the school), and dearly as I loved my work I began to feel the need of a change. I applied for a post in London, and to my delight was called for an interview. With tremendous care I chose the examples of children's work that the Selection Committee had asked to see, and, although I hardly expected to succeed myself, I did not dream that the very best of our precious work would meet with disapproval. Alas, it did. I shall never forget how the same little picture that had been so full of meaning and interest for me seemed merely incompetent and crude when passed from one member to another of that alarming Committee. I wanted to run away and hide. Were my standards all wrong? Was I failing in my duty to the Dudley children? In a flash I realised that what I was looking for was not so much a change of work, but outside criticism which I could respect.

The morning—one of the most miserable I could remember—was followed by an afternoon that altered everything for me. I had planned to spend it seeing pictures; and as I looked at the advertisements I noticed "Exhibition of Children's Drawings" at the Omega Workshops. I would go there first of all. In a lovely upstairs room, which was lighted at both ends by long windows, I found wonderful work by the children of artists, mostly very well-known artists. How eagerly I looked at everything, and with what breathless interest I listened, for I



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had no choice but to listen, to the conversation between the only two people who were there besides myself! The woman was an Inspector of Schools, for she told us so several times, and the man, so courtly, so patient and so clear, was Roger Fry.

These two voices were like an echo of the morning's interview, with all its questions. Already I had rehearsed, it seemed a hundred times, what I might have said; and here were the perfect answers, which I had felt but could not frame. The Inspector (she was the voice of the Committee) found nothing but faults of drawing in the children's work, just as my critics had wanted to correct everything I could show. We were moving round the Exhibition, and were standing now in front of a very curious drawing in which the child had contrived to show both the inside and the outside of a house. How would the pedagogue have put this right? For to change one thing would have meant changing all. It was a child's conception; the child had something to draw, and, without a trace of self-consciousness, the idea had just overflowed on to the paper. Of course it was incorrect, but it was an embryo work of art; and to be shocked by it was as stupid as to be shocked by the child herself.

Roger Fry had nothing but contempt for the drawing ordinarily taught in schools. It destroyed a child's faith in his own art and offered him a sterile skill in its place. Art teachers were dreadful people, and was I not one of them? But the little drawings under my arm were burning a hole in the wrappings. Were they fundamentally different from those in the Exhibition? These were all by young and surely very brilliant children. The Dudley drawings were by ordinary children of all ages. My courage ebbed and flowed. At one moment I was determined to show them, the next to disappear. This unique opportunity was not, however, to be lost. The Inspector left; and, reading

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my thoughts, Roger Fry came and spoke to me. His surprise and pleasure at seeing the drawings, especially those by the older girls, was unmistakable. He must include them in the Exhibition; for they had, he declared, the same forthright simplicity and freshness of vision that was characteristic of younger children's art, and he wished to show that it was possible to retain these precious qualities beyond the early stages. Was it true, after all, that:

*“The Youth who daily farther from the east  
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,  
And by the vision splendid  
Is on his way attended”?*

And so it was that I left my parcel behind and, walking on air, went home without it. When I got back to Dudley and described what had happened, the children seemed unimpressed. But they were always delighted when I told them that their work was good enough to go to London, and my greatest pleasure was in taking it. Roger Fry had said that he would like to see the Dudley drawings from time to time and to make a collection of them. These pilgrimages gave a new inspiration to everything we were doing.

I wish I knew how to describe the wonderfully revealing quality of his criticism. I can only hope that some of those who read this little record will have shared in my joy of having heard it. For me the memory of it is among the most precious of my possessions. Everything he said was so serious, so unsentimental, and so sane. Without praising, still less flattering, us he made me feel that we were included in the wide range of his interests, and even part of the modern movement in art of which he was so great a leader. After our talk was over, I went

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round the Omega Workshops; and here I always looked for, and nearly always found, the answer to anything that might still be puzzling me. Not only did Roger Fry find time to see and discuss the children's drawings, but he opened up for me all sorts of opportunities that could not otherwise have come my way.

Perhaps the most thrilling of all was permission to see the Russian Ballet, at rehearsals from behind the scenes, in the heyday of Diaghilev. We had already made a series of drawings from my description of the ballets *Children's Tales* and *The Midnight Sun* (29). Roger Fry had been specially pleased with them and wanted to add to my material. I saw Picasso himself rehearsing *Parade* and *The Three-Cornered Hat*, and wrestling with the dressmakers, poor souls, who were trying to interpret his designs. I saw wonderful people—Nijinsky, Woizikowsky, Massine, Lifar, Lopokova, Sokolova, Karsavina, Tchernicheva, and all the other stars; and of course Diaghilev—sitting about in the stalls, or waiting in the wings. I saw the wardrobes—with what exquisite care these were kept—the dressing-rooms, properties, and stage settings. Such a tale I had to tell after each visit that I wonder we ever got to work at all. But if we spent much of our lesson-time in talking, we made up for it out of school hours.

The Russian famine was raging at the time, and every penny that could be raised was wanted for the Save the Children Fund. No cause could have been nearer our hearts, and need I say that we longed to play our part in helping. We started an Art Club and met after four o'clock. Members of the staff joined as a matter of course, and we could never have produced our plays or exhibitions without them. It was an expression of that friendly family feeling which is so reassuring. They showed it, too, by dropping into the studio whenever they could, just to see what was going on. The art master from the boys' school



and our curate would come too, and we had surprise visitors of all sorts. Sometimes they would stay and sit for us. There was not the smallest sense of formality or interruption. Birds of a feather flock together.

It was autumn, and the first term was spent in producing a play for Christmas. *The Peace of God*, a very moving but simple story by Selma Lagerlöf, seemed just to dramatise itself for us; and we could do everything ourselves, from writing down the script to making and painting the scenery. The Swedish interior needed decorated furniture. Surplus army stock could be bought for a song at that time; and the solid little stools, and tall candlesticks especially, were exactly what we wanted.

The children loved the new large-scale work, and did it so well that, after the play was over, orders began to pour in for our painted furniture. All the staff, and their friends from farther afield, wanted it. The club served its main purpose in making quite large sums of money, which was what we set out to do; and to my delight I found that its members were becoming conscious of the look of their own home surroundings, and planning to improve them.

The link had been formed. Everything they were learning in the club became related to practical problems of their own. Hitherto they had accepted quite uncritically the horrors of many mass-produced furnishings, and measured the worth of a thing by its cost. Now they knew that, for just a few shillings and with the simplest of materials, army balloon cloth or even unbleached calico, they could block-print covers and bedroom curtains of their own. As these went up and the lace ones came down, other things clamoured to be changed. It was not a case of being able to recognise the label, "good taste," on a thing and therefore approving it. Through their own painting, to themselves unmistakably

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sincere or otherwise, these girls had an internal test, a diviner's rod by which to discover the common denominator of art.

I always enjoyed their efforts to find words in which to describe these differences. They would speak of a thing as "just pretending"; or as "being deceitful," "skin deep," "sham," "solid" or "shadow," "imitation," "make-believe," "whole" or "broken"; and once I remember, surprisingly enough, "British or foreign"; then "faked, forged, false, fibbing, artificial, April fooling, mock, mimicking." But, perhaps without knowing it, a child who said that a thing was "mortal or immortal" came nearest of all to the truth.

As time went on, and thanks to Roger Fry—for it was through the Omega Exhibition—we won the friendship of other artists, of writers, critics, and many well-known people; among them Miss Margaret Bulley. From the very early days she was a kind of fairy godmother to us, and I cannot measure my gratitude to her. At her suggestion the council of the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester showed the children's drawings and designs at the Gallery; and among those who visited the Exhibition were representatives of the cotton trade. To my surprise and delight I was asked to sell some of the block-printed patterns for reproduction.

Through Miss Bulley's interest and tireless efforts, that summer the children could write to some of the London Stores and buy stuff for their cotton frocks which they had themselves designed. These prints (12) must have had quite a wide general sale; but only once did I see a stranger wearing one, and she was a very smart lady who jumped out of a taxi one Saturday morning and went into a big jeweller's shop in Bond Street. That pattern, such a spirited one, had been tossed off at ten minutes to four one Friday afternoon by a young rascal who had wasted her time till I threatened not to let her escape

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unless she produced something reasonable. If only she could have shared my thrill of seeing the taxi-cab lady that Saturday morning!

We were blessed then, as I have said, with an ever widening circle of friends outside the school; and within it was Miss Frood, a head-mistress whose help and support were in themselves an inspiration. She could always find time to visit the studio, and never did so without rekindling our spirits. The children trusted her completely, and what she took so seriously herself must indeed be worth while to them.

*Transformations* is the title of that wonderful second volume of Roger Fry's writings. It is a testimony to the truth that the artist so much loves looking at things that, as he looks, they change into something "rich and strange." For him there are no Calibans.

It was in Dudley that the discovery of this began for me. How was it that, as I travelled by tram from Dudley to Birmingham, sights so sad should seem so sweet? Before me sat a woman with a shawl round her head. Why am I trying not to stare at her? What would she say if I told her that to me she was as lovely as a Saint? Beyond her stretched the Black Country. How can it be that this too is beautiful? I feel almost ashamed to find it so.

Oxford, where I lived, that of course was beautiful, as everyone knows. But its beauty is not a beauty that asks to be painted, but one that stands aloof and apart in its perfection. Seldom had it shaken me and taken my breath away, as did these present sights. What can I compare with it? When a cross person is suddenly kind, or a mean one gives. It always seems unfair that this should count for so much more than the kindness we look for from the kind. No one need have pitied me, as they often did, for having to work among these dark satanic scenes. They have shown me that the subject of a picture, just as the



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subject of a story, does not matter. It is love that counts. I can paint a lump of coal if only I can love it enough. How could I fail to learn this lesson in Dudley where “love” is the local greeting we have for one another? “Can you tell me the way to Lower Gornal?” I ask. “Yes, love, over the bridge and through the gate,” is the answer I get.

## IV

### PRISON WORK

**M**Y first experience of teaching outside the Dudley High School was a thrilling one, and offered, indeed, a great opportunity, for at Margery Fry's suggestion Dr. Hamblin Smith invited me to take Handicraft and Embroidery Classes in the Birmingham Prison just after the close of the war in 1918. I was deeply interested in this voluntary work, the scope of which grew so rapidly that I was soon joined by two fellow-members of the Dudley Staff.

Our first pupils were a small group of patients in the hospital of the women's prison. They had hardly any skill with the needle and had never before dreamt of designing anything; but so that there should be nothing second-hand about their work, our rule was that everyone should make her own pattern. Imagine our surprise when it seemed that, almost as a matter of course, the design took the form of texts and pious sentiments lettered across the linen, with anchors, arrows, hearts, flags, favours, badges, crests, signs and seals of all sorts as trimmings.

Seldom was there any real beauty in what they did; but the intensity of feeling woven into it gave it a deep human interest, and was often expressed in agitated stitchery so close, so devoid of any sense of economy of effort or time. But the women were always ready to take suggestions, and in class from small beginnings, such as the arrangement of criss-cross bars, checks, dots, spots, stripes, and simple shapes, a

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very primitive sort of decoration grew up and developed without difficulty. Those who had at first believed themselves incapable of ideas soon came to take as much pleasure in making the design as in carrying it out. The prison doctor was, from the beginning, enthusiastic about our classes, and when he saw how much they were enjoyed in the hospital, he suggested to the Governor that all the juniors (that is, those between the ages 16 and 23), boys as well as girls, should be taught. The prison staff, however, was at first cold and critical, if not actually hostile; but before long the work had won their sympathy and they were on our side. One evening, when the warder on duty came for the class, both he and I noticed that several boys had little bits of raffia and other treasures tucked away about them. "I am taking care of it for teacher; you can't trust some of these people," said one of the most outspoken. "All right, my boy, you look after it," was the kindly reply; but we all knew that every inch would be used up in the boy's own work that very evening. Just before the summer holiday, which meant a long absence, was about to begin, I remember one seemingly hard old warder saying to me, "I am sorry you are going to be away; we like your coming. It has stopped all that sobbing in the cells."



## V.

### FRESH FIELDS: PART-TIME WORK IN LONDON AND ELSEWHERE

I HAVE now recorded as simply as I can the story of my early years of teaching in Dudley. The freedom and happiness of the atmosphere there had made it possible for the children to develop an art which was essentially their own, but which was none the less the result of their partnership with me. I was indeed charged with exercising too strong a personal influence and with imposing something of my own which produced a family likeness in the children's work. But for my part I found each child's work so individually characteristic that when I looked at the painting, I saw the child herself. And yet, while this was so, I, too, saw the family likeness. There was in the work as a whole a manner so unmistakable as to mark it as a little local school of painting. I welcomed it. To me it was both natural and kindling. How can I explain it? We were members of a community with its own strong customs and conventions (it isn't Christmas unless the windows have been cleaned); and the drawings were in the Dudley dialect, traditional, intimate, indigenous to the soil, and mysteriously revealing. These things counted for much, and within the studio itself influences of the same sort were at work: even the way I cut the paper, the colour combinations and limitations I suggested, and the method of glazing colours over a thin transparent wash. These, and a hundred seeming trifles so slight that I can feel rather than describe them, united to produce a native style, a painting idiom through which the children

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became articulate; for it provided that framework or form which is one of the necessities of art. And they were encouraged to criticise and discuss their own and one another's work. They were always expected to make a written valuation, even if only a word or two, on every drawing they did. A vernacular developed. "Right or wrong." "This is just what I saw." "It was there, but it disappeared." "The colours are false and made up." "Too big or too small," and so on. Each week the best work was shown on the studio walls. In these ways something passed from one child to another, and I am quite sure that the less capable were helped by feeling, however unconsciously, that everyone can paint. I only know that all had the confidence to try.

We were, then, interdependent, and although I was as self-effacing as I could be, I knew that the children relied upon me rather as an orchestra relies upon its conductor.

They would say that I opened a door for them. This meant that they preferred to be given a subject rather than find one of their own. Once in possession of the all-necessary mind-picture to which my description gave birth, they were directed, steadied, and settled. Every moment of the lesson was purposefully spent, while if called upon to work without such guidance they would try first one thing and then another, and in the end achieve little or nothing at all.

Visitors to Dudley who liked our work would sometimes suggest that the Dudley children were specially unsophisticated, and that I should find another type of child less teachable. This gave me an uneasy feeling. Would my ideas transplant? I knew that I must put this to the test.

For some years, teaching had completely satisfied and filled my mind. I related every artistic experience to it, and in my search for material and inspiration everything was grist to my mill. At length,

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however, the time did come when I felt the need for reflection and study. At this point I had the infinitely good fortune of being invited by Margery Fry to spend a term with her and her brother Roger in London. This meant freedom from responsibility, and the opportunity for quiet thought as to what my next field of work should be. I shall never forget the first sight of the house that was now for a time to be my home. On the right as one entered there was a long room lighted at both ends by large windows. The walls were mottled in rich reddish tones, and were hung, to my surprise and delight, with some of the pictures that I had seen years before at the Post-Impressionist Exhibition. The sun streamed into the room that autumn afternoon, and I knew I had time to satisfy my first enchanted curiosity before my host and hostess arrived. In this room artists and critics gathered to discuss the burning controversies of the day. They brought with them contemporary pictures, and during the next few months it was as an enraptured onlooker that I sometimes had the opportunity of being present.

It was at about this time that the London Day Training College opened a Graduate Course for art students, and I had the happiness of being asked to become one of the tutors. This was a part-time appointment and left me free, not only to undertake other work in or near London, but, best of all, to return to Dudley for two days at the end of each week.

Every Monday I went to Benenden, a public school for girls high up in a lovely part of the Weald of Kent, and on Wednesday mornings I went to Hayes Court, a delightful private school where also the children were fortunate enough to have wide opportunities. On Tuesdays I supervised the students' school practice, and on Wednesday afternoons we were visited in the College by groups of boys and girls from



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neighbouring elementary schools. On Saturdays, through the introduction of an American friend, a class was collected for me in a lovely country house in Northamptonshire. This was now my weekly programme of work. I do not recall having myself taken any steps to arrange it, but it offered the very opportunity I needed; for, during the week, I met children from almost every kind of home. How slight and skin-deep were the external differences that might seem to divide them, how lasting the links that united them as children! In looking at their drawings one could always say, "Only a child could have done this," but never more.

I think the children themselves enjoyed my varied programme almost as much as I did, for I took with me the work of one group to another. We had so much to recount. Those who were taught at home listened with breathless interest to everything I could tell them about the children who went to school, while on Thursdays, when I returned to Dudley, work was not allowed to begin until I had given a sort of News Letter of what was going on in London and in that dreamland where children had ponies to ride and servants and nurses to wait on them, and where footmen came to carry and change the paint-water.

Wednesday afternoon with the students and children was also usually given up to painting, but we had a colour game which is described here in detail because it has not been mentioned elsewhere.

We met in a large light studio at the top of the building, where conditions were almost perfect for experiment and research. Here there was space for a valuable piece of colour-training apparatus, for which I had collected many hundreds of duplicate skeins of wool. At each end of the room hung a huge holland sheet divided into ten sections. In these sections the skeins were arranged in groups. White

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and nearly white, yellow, orange, red and pink, blue, green, violet and purple, buff and brown, grey and black, mottled and marled. On one sheet the skeins were permanently fixed and numbered; on the other the duplicates were detachable, looped over curtain hooks and, of course, unnumbered. One version of the game was played by dividing the children into small teams in charge of a student. On the word "Go," each child was shown a skein; its number having been recorded, she was told to run to the end of the room, find its pair, unhook it, and return with it. Only the subtlest differences divided certain of the skeins, yet some of the children showed an almost uncanny power of memorising colour. I recall one occasion when, in the fifteen minutes we generally gave to this game, one little boy who could not read made nineteen right choices out of nineteen. When I asked him how he did it, he did not seem to know; but, after a few moments of puzzled reflection, he answered, "I look at it, and then say to myself, 'Is it light? Is it dark? Is it neither?'" An explanation which hardly seemed to account for his success.

We occasionally challenged members of the College staff to a colour contest, which the children enjoyed because they were invariably easy winners. We never had the opportunity of discovering whether our learned competitors would have had more success if given more training.

One afternoon, I was suddenly aware that a child was looking into my eyes with rapt attention. "They have little speckles in them and are just like one of the sock wools at the end of Set 6," she told me. I often wish now that I had recorded more of the children's remarks and conversation concerning colour. One other story does come back to me. I thought a child was being really wasteful with the paints, and asked him why he kept mixing colours and washing away what he

## PART-TIME WORK IN LONDON AND ELSEWHERE

had made. "I want a colour I can't find," he told me, and, pointing to a sort of wine shade, he said, "It is that, only blue."

It was good to watch the rapid growth of the children's power of recognising and remembering differences, and the way in which this game awakened a new interest in colour and paints. This was reflected in the growing refinement with which the children used all their materials.



## VI

### MATERIALS, MANNERS, AND MAKESHIFTS

EVERY artist has a right regard for the wherewithal with which he works.

While we watch the members of an orchestra take their places on the platform before a concert begins, we see the affection with which each one treats his instrument. No need to tell us that it is his most precious possession. Every carpenter loves his tools, every tailor his tweeds, every cricketer his bat, every angler his tackle. And if the love of words and a well-thumbed dictionary is one step towards the understanding of literature or the command of a language, curiosity about ways and means is certainly a step towards mastery in the technique of painting. I welcome the generous provision which education authorities now make for painting in most schools; and yet, if nothing is privately owned there is certainly some loss. When first I taught, every child, even the poorest, possessed a little box of paints and a brush. Sometimes these were respectively so hard and so hairless as to be almost useless, but the owner could be taught to care for them as though they were the choicest, and to feel a personal pride in his own possessions which is not possible when things are all common property.

In my early days of teaching I kept a sort of shop, and could sell, at a halfpenny apiece, refills for the china pans of water-colour, and respectable brushes for a penny or two. But I also stocked and sold the aristocrats of colour, and Saturday pennies were willingly saved and

spent on such rare things as rose madder and real springy sables. A specially praiseworthy painting could win a prize; and, though a variety of gifts was offered, the choice nearly always fell on some addition to the young artist's outfit. If these things were possible to a generation of children whose resources were so small, surely, in spite of the reduced spending power of money, the children of today, who are relatively rich, can do something.

Every child came to the lesson carrying a small parcel which contained her precious belongings, the necessary minimum of apparatus. A linen cloth was wrapped diagonally round the paint-box to protect the japanning and to serve as a paint rag, and was held in place by an elastic band. The brush and pencil were passed through this, but the points were never allowed to project. This was a better plan than putting them inside the box, where they would be bumped about. Here only the colours and small sticks of charcoal and chalk were kept. The palettes had to be perfectly clean. Not only did these things give great pleasure to the possessor, but thus armed she could begin work without any waiting. I always collected paint-boxes that could be lent when need be, sometimes for use and sometimes just as objects of interest. My mother's box was such. It had a secret drawer with shells of gold and some strange thing called a silver point. And I have always found that children are fascinated by a colourman's catalogue. They would pore over the pages where the names of paints are listed, and exclaim excitedly when they discovered no less than twenty-seven yellows, thirty reds, and so on. And such lovely names—aureolin, alizarin, cadmium, cerulean, cobalt, oxide of chromium, terre verte, viridian. And their astonishment at the prices: fifteen shillings for a tiny cake of real ultramarine. Well may it be bluer than the sea itself at such a price! “What is it made of?” they would ask, and love to learn that it is the

dust of lapis lazuli; that sepia is the secretion of a cuttle-fish; that the umbers, ochres, and siennas are earths; that gamboge is a resin, and that cochineal and carmine come from an insect. Why Indian red and Italian pink, Antwerp and Prussian blue, Naples yellow, Chinese white, and, most curious of all, ivory black?

Before each lesson I put out piles of paper, cut from Imperial sheets, in three stock sizes which were our standards. Each sheet was almost square, 15 in. by 16 in., 10 in. by 11 in., and 6 in. by 7 in. These were convenient because they could be cut out without waste. I taught the children to think of the square as the simplest of shapes, and to fix it firmly in mind and let it show them the exact shape and size that suited their idea. The children knew that they might ask for and receive paper of whatever size and shape they needed. I attach great importance to this conception of the paper as providing the picture frame. It has a fundamental effect which may be compared with the key in music and the metre in verse. It will encourage and control the shapeliness in a child's work.

Now and then, when sometimes perhaps out of sheer eagerness to begin, a child would dash down her idea without any consideration for the frame, the result was nearly always unsatisfactory. We called such things penny-a-yard pictures. Gradually the children wanted to paint on bigger paper. But for this large-scale work, which lasted from lesson to lesson, water-colour alone would no longer serve. Powder colour proved to be the solution to the problem; but the difficulty was to find a suitable binding medium. Yolk of egg was too precious; and, while I was waiting for the manufacturers to meet this need, we improvised with powder colour from the drysalter mixed with size and other unsuitable egg substitutes. Later on we became so accustomed to being able to buy ready-made colour powders for



school use that it was difficult to realise the drawbacks of the early days.

These powder colours were stored in large glass sweet-bottles and stood on a shelf where they looked lovely against a white wall. Colours seen against a white background are realised in a special way. It gives them their absolute value. I am sure that the constant sight of them increased the children's colour sense, and so did the spools of embroidery wool which filled a tall cupboard at the end of the room.

But, alas, this age of plenty is past. Not only are materials now very expensive, but there are some things which it is often difficult to get at all. I cannot say what I should do under present conditions. It may comfort the teachers, if they are hard up for paper, to know that in the days when a sheet measuring 15 in. by 16 in. seemed to us quite large, and when much of the work measured no more than 6 in. by 7 in., the children could be taught that every inch was precious, and with only this small surface to deal with they could treat it as such. We used to cut a rectangular hole in a piece of scrap paper or card and place it over the painting; and, forgetting everything else, consider just the colour and texture of every patch. We often put, alongside some specially lovely object, the petal of a pansy, the peel of a rosy apple, a small piece of silk, thistledown, tinsel; or we just thought hard about such things and practised painting precious surfaces all by themselves. We made little pattern books of painted patches. A little rectangle was ruled round, and I would say, for example, "Paint one in clearest cobalt. It must be luminous, so that the white paper gleams through as a satin petticoat through a chiffon dress. Now with much deeper blue put a criss-cross of lines; and in the spaces between, in solid paint, a tiny lemon spot." We used colours just as we pleased, as thick as water,

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milk, cream, custard, butter or soft cheese, transparent or cloudy; and we sometimes finished up with varnish over it all. Our miniature paintings had the quality of lustre or inlay, which is now very seldom seen. They were so small, so shy, so saying-so-much. Work can be so big, so boastful, so about-nothing-at-all. Indeed, I do not want to put the clock back. We have struggled so hard to give children the freedom that broad and generous materials will provide; but present conditions must be met, and our very limitations can be liberations.

It seems to me that rag pictures, which I have mentioned earlier, sewn on any bit of stuff or even sacking, and using all the odds and ends that can be collected, may suggest another saving and satisfying solution.

We revelled in patchwork pieces, using patterned and plain materials of many textures, silk and satin, cretonne and crash, cloth and cotton, felt and fur; seaming and stitching the pieces together on to the background. It takes a long, long time to make a patchwork picture which is the modern version of our great-grandmothers' cross-stitch samplers handed down to us; and our children should feel that they too are making something that will last. They will return to their painting with renewed interest after an interval of other work, and the varied possibilities of paint itself will be more valued and really appreciated in the interval. Indeed, it is well that materials should offer a certain amount of resistance, for we should otherwise never fully explore them. Paint of any kind is apt to be too easy a medium of expression, and the children will gain greatly if they can carve and model as well as paint. Anything that will develop a sense of construction is to be welcomed. I think the secret of success in the matter of materials lies in finding those which will suggest to the children's minds new ways of working. After we had been painting with big bristle brushes and

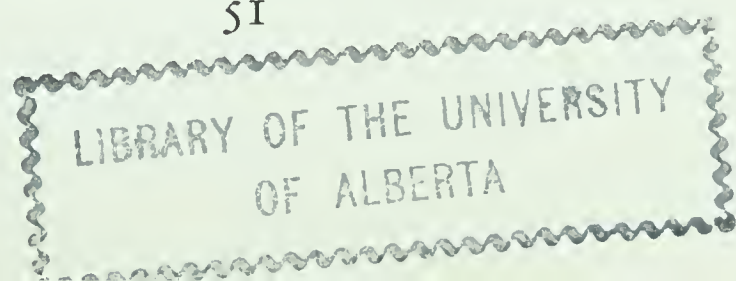


## MATERIALS, MANNERS, AND MAKESHIFTS

poster or powder paint, I often provided the finest of mapping pens, smooth paper, and waterproof ink. And while it is true to say that a wide variety is good, paradoxically, perhaps, a very important point is, at times, to offer the children a strictly limited choice. Necessity is the mother of invention; and if only three paints are to be had, a child will discover what can be done by mixing them; whereas she may be tempted to use the colours as they come if allowed a full range to select from. The next step is to withhold colour altogether for a time, and provide, say, black conté crayon, charcoal, or chalk.

In 1926 my sister and I visited Russia to see the schools and prisons. Even as long ago as that the art teaching allowed of free work; and although, in my opinion, there was not nearly enough guidance or inspiration from the teacher, nevertheless things were moving in the right direction. But there were really no materials at all; and after one child had used a piece of paper his picture had either to be washed out or painted over with a crude kind of chalky colour wash, so that another child might take a turn. Home-made charcoal, chalk, and colour that the children collected seemed to serve quite well. I wish I could remember all the ingenious dodges and devices of these people, who had been schooled to make bricks without straw. The impression that remains is one of indomitable courage and determination born of a passionate desire for painting.

Our outward journey had been through Sweden and Finland to Leningrad and Moscow. But in coming home we turned south (and in doing so saw the seasons change in a single night) so that we might visit Vienna and meet that great pioneer of enlightened art teaching, Professor Cizek. We had already seen the drawings from his Children's Art Classes, which had been collected by the organisers of the Save the Children Fund and shown all over England.





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They aroused the very deepest interest and were a revelation to most people. Their size and their brilliance astonished every one; so did the sense of decoration and the assurance with which they were painted. A few outstanding examples met with immediate success, and were reproduced, sold by the thousand, and quickly found their way into our schools and nurseries. It was well that money should be raised for a need so great, but my first thought was that Professor Cizek had not himself made the choice of the drawings for reproduction, as they were not those that an artist would wish to see perpetuated. Tucked away in the exhibition were lovely, tender little things, some in cut paper, others drawn in pen and ink, which were much more moving than the highly competent but mannered work which became associated with the name of Cizek. He would, I feel sure, have consented to these small drawings being reproduced for our English children to see; and the talks that we had with him confirmed this opinion. The precocious skill and sophistication of the Viennese children were among his problems, and not things to be praised. His own approval was of all that is simple, sincere, and childlike.

## VII

### LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL

#### THE BEGINNING OF MY WORK AS INSPECTOR

I LOVED teaching, and could not escape a sense of loss when I was called upon to leave it by being appointed an Inspector of Schools under the London County Council. This brings me to the third and final period of my work, and the one I find most difficult to describe. My debt to many friends, however, determines me to try. There were at the time of my appointment more than seven thousand separate schools, staffed by at least twenty thousand teachers, under the Council, and the problem of establishing contact with so wide a field might have been a baffling one but for the freedom given by this great Authority and the trust they placed in me as one of their officials. I was left to interpret my task in my own way, and I remember with gratitude the things that furthered my work. Above all was the fact that I found myself again with an understanding and endearing Head, Dr. F. H. Spencer; there were no half-measures about him.

I see now in looking back how difficult it must have been to meet some of my requests. One of the earliest was for a room of my own in the County Hall. I was, as it were, asking for the moon; but sure enough, I was given the room, though only B.62, and at County Hall "B" signifies basement. There was no window, no warmth, a concrete floor, and it was stacked with junk and old pictures; but for all its shortcomings it served our purpose, and we even came to take a great pride in it.

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I want here to digress. What were these old frames doing in Room B.62? They were discarded school pictures, due for burial and best left undescribed, whose place was being taken by gay and glowing things which were as welcome a greeting as was the music of the London schools. The toil of mounting these long stone staircases that led to the top storeys was soon forgotten, for really lovely music would come floating down to meet one, Mendelssohn and Schubert so sweetly sung by young voices, Valiant's song from the *Pilgrim's Progress*, Parry's "Jerusalem," filled the air. It was fitting to find pictures that were in harmony with the music, and to feel that they joined in listening to it.

The name of Mr. Tomlinson, my senior colleague, will always be associated with this great reform. He has worked untiringly to provide good prints and to persuade teachers to love and choose the best. This and his unfailing interest in the children's own art, in even the efforts of the very youngest child, are among the things that I remember with gratitude and appreciation.

We turned B.62 into a little picture gallery, hung it with all the most interesting of the children's drawings, and made it our headquarters. Here the teachers and I could meet and talk things out, and I soon reached a much wider circle than would have been possible if I had depended on school visits alone. It became necessary for me to set aside a special time for these meetings, and the teachers were told that they would always find me in our room on Wednesday afternoons, and were invited to come and bring examples of their pupils' work. We all valued these exchanges, and if I could plant a seed, they knew how to make it grow. On meeting again, after even a short interval, I would find a flowering which reminded me of the magical performance I had seen as a little girl when an Indian conjurer made a tiny cutting bud and blossom before my very eyes. So rich was this harvest



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and so great my happiness in having helped to produce it that my sense of loss was soon forgotten.

To anyone interested in education there can be no greater privilege than the right of entry into our schools. It gave me a wonderful sense of hospitality to know that every door was open. From my very first visit the teachers welcomed me most warmly, and helped me to forget the horrid title of my office. They wanted to explore and experiment, and they seemed to guess that I wanted to do the same. It happened that a new idea was taking shape in my mind, and one which made a wide appeal; I think because it stood half-way between Handwriting and Drawing (28). Ever since my student days in Birmingham, where I had been taught writing by a pupil of Edward Johnston, I had been deeply interested in calligraphy. Now for some time I had been occupied with studying the spontaneous scribble of very small children. As I watched it I gradually realised the supreme importance of natural movement, and saw that the gestures that the children made were those, and only those, of which the hand was most easily capable. By scribbling, they were teaching themselves both to write and to draw, just as through prattling they learned to talk. In a sense they could, as infants, already both write and speak, though not our shapes or sounds. I was determined to search till I found a way of teaching both writing and drawing which sacrificed nothing of Nature's rich dowry. I saw that in scribble the same patterns occurred over and over again, and reduced themselves to six that were separate and essential; that in shape every letter of our alphabet was but a variation of these themes. The idea absorbed and fascinated me; and, as I reflected, its full implications gradually unfolded. I remember that on the day when the parts seemed to have fallen finally into place, I found myself on the top of a bus in Islington when I should have been in Southampton Row. I had for-

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gotten everything in watching with my mind's eye the gambollings of these graphic gestures. The story of the development of this idea in terms of handwriting is told elsewhere (see *Writing and Writing Patterns*, published by the University of London Press). The lovely thing was that from these simple beginnings the London children extended their artistic vocabulary and developed a kind of folk art which found its happiest interpretation through the use of the homeliest materials—chalk and charcoal, wrapping and packing papers, hoghair brushes, and powder paints sold by the pound.

Our first need was for one or two centres which teachers could visit. A tiny church school, in fact the very smallest school in London, was amongst those that volunteered to work out the scheme. I chose it because it was easily reached, and this made it possible for me to pay a series of visits myself and to keep in close touch. Its single classroom and solitary teacher with thirty little children (Jean aged 3 was the youngest, and Louise aged 8 was the eldest) seemed like a village school; though only two minutes away the traffic thundered up and down one of London's busiest streets. Once round the corner all was quiet, and with its wise and watchful leader there could have been no better nursery for ideas.

How much I enjoyed this close and continuous contact with the very young and getting to know a group by name. They were my first Writing Pattern exponents, and seemed aware of their responsibilities. After school they would sometimes start me on my way home. They had a sense of friendly hospitality, but they also had something to show. On these occasions a small hand would be slipped into mine and with an air of secrecy I was steered out of my course. There were innumerable little courts and mews and entries behind the grand front doors of that rich West End district. Here the children had appro-



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priated pitches where they practised as pavement artists. The large flagstones provided a perfect surface for chalk patterns. These little coloured carpets were the next best things to gardens.

But in this midget school it was difficult to receive more than a very few visitors at a time, and feeling quite sure that things would now go forward there I started afresh, this time at the invitation of the District Inspector of Bethnal Green, in one of the biggest Infant schools in the East End. With the same eager delight the children took what we gave them, at first just those six fundamental scribble shapes, swing-swing, over-over, up curl, down curl, and so on, and, accepting them as familiar playthings, taught them to dance. Much as the children enjoyed drawing their patterns on those big sheets which showed up the charcoal so well because it could bite, they were thinking all the time of the still greater happiness of colouring the shapes. How quick they were to see the importance of accent or stress. If this little diamond shape is painted dark, the pattern will say one thing; if this large oval lozenge is light, it will make another pattern of it altogether. My one drawing can turn into half a dozen different things, and here is one of these big empty hollows. I shall put bunches of flowers, a bird, or other pretty things; they won't be hungry then. The child who first saw this crossed the bridge between writing patterns as play and writing patterns as pictures. You ask me to define the difference: look, and the work will show you. All have been enjoyed, some have been seen.

It was the children themselves who convinced us all. On painting afternoons, they would gather round the school gate waiting to get in the very moment it opened. Once in possession of their paper, brushes, and paints, they seemed to enter a world of their own.

On Open Days visitors crowded to watch them work; but the children did not even look up. On one occasion I remember a head-



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mistress asked a child to stand in order that she might take her place to see and discuss her work with me. The child obeyed, but she just walked round to the front of her desk and went on painting though her picture was upside-down. The headmistress asked no more questions. The child herself had unconsciously answered them all. I still can see the little boy who was working on the floor and made a bridge of himself across his precious painting to protect it from the feet of passers-by.

I want to make quite sure that I have not given the impression that Writing Patterns should come before the painting of pictures. From the very beginning both should go on side by side. A child learns to paint by painting. At their simplest valuation Writing Patterns provide a happy form of painting practice; at their best they enrich the child's stock of mental images and incline him to see in terms of shape. Through them he will sustain his efforts, for they present him with a formidable task, yet one of which he will not tire. What the child puts on the paper in his first picture may be to us a mere scribble; to him it is perfectly clear and complete. He does not see what is there at all, for he is looking at his idea, not at his drawing. In helping him to see, as it were, both inwards and outwards at the same time, the stress must never be on skill; all we can do is to encourage him to find the very fullest and, in the right sense, most finished form of expression, so that the picture on his paper shall more and more nearly come to match the one that he has in his mind.

## VIII

### THE NON-SPECIALIST TEACHER AS ART TEACHER

HOW was it that the work went forward? The times were ripe, the teachers' minds were ready, chiefly because of the growing respect for the individuality of the child. In art this respect is a necessity; for unless a child is expressing his own vision he is expressing nothing at all.

Possessing, then, as he does this respect and understanding love for children and all that it implies, the good non-specialist teacher has the essential qualifications of an art teacher, and often succeeds where even the trained specialist may fail. He has the fundamentals, and in my work I found it far more possible to give, as it were, the artistic application of these fundamentals than it would have been to give the fundamentals themselves.

There is a fatal misconception of the modern method which allows a child to think that anything will do. The teacher he needs most, and honours most, is one who both knows and cares how he is working, and will accept no second-best artistic effort from him.

The teacher's first problem, then, will be to find a standard by which to value his pupil's work. When he makes the discovery that neatness and accuracy do not constitute art, what will he find to take their place? Never again anything external, for it will have been made plain to him that an idea clearly beheld as a mental picture will have the power to break through technical difficulties and find its own way on

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to the paper; but teachers will have realised that while it is impossible for any adult to teach a technique that matches childlike vision, children nevertheless need teaching if they are to feel their powers of expression keeping pace with the growth of their ideas, and so retain their interest in the subject. The precious thing that the new methods can produce is not essentially connected with the use of powder paint, particular papers, big brushes, easels, or anything else that we have come to connect with enlightened teaching, nor on any reliance on material or equipment. When a teacher frees the artist's vision within a child, he inspires him to find a completely truthful expression for it. The vision itself is so lovable that nothing short of sincerity will serve. The slovenly and slapdash cannot possibly satisfy. We have to look for something shining through the surface of the paper. Shall we begin in our search by learning to distinguish between the different ways in which a child may use drawing, and by pruning away those that have nothing whatsoever to do with art or are alien to art? We can easily recognise merely descriptive drawing which is just a catalogue or record of facts. Sketches of scientific apparatus, for example, botanical diagrams, plans, maps and so on, merely imitative plant and object drawing, are all useful enough in their own place and way, but are not art. We must realise that satisfaction may be found in projecting the wish for something that real life has so far denied, the longing for grand and grown-up dresses, sentimental situations, and other deeply felt desires. And we must reckon with a mere "doodling," a more or less automatic, linear scribble, mechanical, empty and insensitive, the very opposite of the nervous, vital outlines that the hand delineates when moved in obedience to an inward artistic idea.

As these things are separated away, the artist's vision stands apart and is seen for what it is, a music of shapes, born in the expression of an



## NON-SPECIALIST TEACHER AS ART TEACHER

idea, in which no one thing counts in its own right, but only in its place and relation to the whole. Change the order in which notes follow one another in a melody and the melody has gone; move a single shape to left or right in a picture and the picture is no more. This balance, which is the underlying and essential brotherliness of things, is beauty. Supreme mastery of technical means in the sense of the ability to copy or represent outward appearances will not bring it to birth if the vision is wanting, and may even hinder its possessor; whereas with hardly any facility little children make drawings which are vital and animate. The fact is, of course, that catching a likeness or copying appearances is only one of the many possible means at an artist's disposal; and though the true artist may employ a realistic technique and seem to be just a copyist, in fact he is never so. His concern is always with matching something inward, never with imitating a physical or objective reality. 7

Children who have been brought up to trust and express their own mental imagery will not readily fall into the trap of being overimpressed by mere skill. They will realise that it is never more than the humble servant of ideas, and that what we have to say always matters more than how we say it. A child whose drawing had been a delight both to herself and to me right through the school once said, when she had to produce the kind of work that School Certificate examiners then demanded, "Why should I copy that? It's there already."

In the past, when drawing was a hand-and-eye training, there were seldom more than half a dozen children in a class who excelled. Now that we have the loftier aim of finding and freeing the potential artist in every child, our task of teaching drawing, though difficult, is far more worth while and full of hope.

## IX

### THE ADOLESCENT

FINALLY and above all, the teacher must be ready to help when the stage of adolescence is reached in which his pupils may suddenly see their own work as childish and unlike nature, and will want to achieve what seems to be a superior result by copying something conventionally realistic. The choice of copy will generally be determined by two things. In the first place it will represent, as I have said, a wish-fulfilment for something which real life itself has denied; and a mass of advertising material and magazine illustration exists to provide for this very desire. And furthermore, he will choose something trivial enough to be easily copied. This deceitful substitute avoids the discipline that any genuine artistic expression demands, and presents the very greatest difficulty in a child's artistic development, when, as is often the case, it is praised by misguided parents, and, alas, by some teachers. No teacher can help who has not himself outgrown the love for the pretty-pretty and sentimental; but with healthy standards of his own he will then be able to accept these copies as artistically worthless, and will have the satisfaction of seeing that, side by side with them, his pupils can still produce something that is their very own. There is no one solution to this problem of the break between the vision of childhood which finds its own idiom, and knows of no alternative, and this stage of disillusionment. But if our teaching can do something to provide a painting tradition which is at present lacking in the people, and

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honestly tackle with the children the question of realism and representation, it will have done much.

If up to the age of 13 or 14 a child has painted from a mental image, and has not had his artistic eye blinded by dreary and premature lessons in observation, he will find in working direct from a wisely chosen model a fresh and stimulating experience. In Dudley we always engaged someone to sit for the Fifth Form girls who were preparing for Life Drawing in the School Certificate Examination (8). The sitter was seldom anyone good-looking. The humble fee of two or three shillings was kept for old men and women, to whom this and a tray of tea and cake were a very great treat. They were without self-consciousness, and allowed me to dress them up or do anything that would help to make an appeal to the children. Sometimes, as I had done with the still-life groups, I darkened the room and, by means of bicycle lamps or other artificial lights, showed the seated figure as a sort of statue carved out in great shadow shapes. I remember the intensity of feeling expressed by the leader of a deputation from the Upper Fourth, who asked, "Can't we, too, have the living woman to go at?" Meaning, can't we, too, have a model? They had her, and they also had the still-life groups; but I took good care to see that everything I asked them to study had some shock of strangeness and surprise. In the past, for want of anyone else, I had sometimes asked a member of the class to pose; but seldom, if ever, was anything worth having produced. Those who had skill drew a sort of hockey-champion-idealised version of themselves. The rest just failed altogether. One day a child said to me, "Looking at Marjorie is all right, but it doesn't give me the painty feeling." I have spoken of the great shadow shapes cast by the bicycle lamps. I gave the girls nothing but a brush and a single colour with which to find the shapes. With what awakened interest they used their eyes, and



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how powerful and real were the results of this seeing! (7). The moment had come for exposing the sham realism of the copies. Only by custom and convention were they anything at all; and those who produced them saw only a sort of label on things, and rendered them, not as in any sense they are, but through a set of symbols—a symbol face, a symbol eye, a symbol arm; and through sheer familiarity this stylised shorthand masqueraded as the reality. “Chocolate boxy” was the adjective we applied to everything of this kind, and we came to understand each other perfectly on the point.

One day, by some happy chance, a child from the Junior School was sent to the studio to show me his drawing. He was very small and very solemn, and my girls at once asked to be allowed to draw him. He had planted himself; and, as he stood there holding up his paper, I, too, saw that he made a picture. Though so small, he gave one a strange impression of poise and solidity. I asked the girls to pretend that they could pass their hands under his little feet, and to imagine the sense of pressure. Some very fine drawings were produced, and the work that followed was strong and substantial. Up till then, many of their people had been like puppets suspended from the sky, giving merely a surface effect. We built some groups suggested by old family photographs. Now the standing figures really stood; those who were seated sat, and yet the impression made was not one of material weight. Whenever I saw this stateliness, I stored the idea in my mind for our Life Drawing lessons.

## X

### FLOWER PAINTING BOTH “FAIRY” AND MATTER-OF-FACT

PLANT drawing was another School Certificate subject, but we came to interpret it in a way that captured the interest of all the adolescents; and, while the examiners seemed to approve of very literal pencil studies, we ventured far from this orthodox path in our preparatory work. Daffodils are lovely things, but if the children were asked to draw one it seemed impossible for them to forget the other drawings that they had already seen and to see the daffodil afresh for themselves. This was true of all the more familiar flowers, and it was little wonder that the children found nature drawing to be a dull affair. But if I could collect all sorts of strange and unexpected things such as white ivy, black pansies, pink bluebells, blue poppies, lichen, Crown Imperial, mixtures of all sorts, moss, twigs, even a tangle of weeds, and spread these on a tray, and then find a few vases of a kind the children had not seen before, and perhaps some small baskets, and ask them to take turns in arranging a flower picture for the others, they were happy, and produced the dearest little peepshows or conceits. As I watched them tending these trifles, I was always reminded of the child in Coventry Patmore's lovely poem called “The Toys,” who, on being sent to bed in disgrace, had put, within his reach, his most precious treasures:

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*“A box of counters, and a red-vein’d stone,  
A piece of glass abraded by the beach,  
And six or seven shells,  
A bottle with bluebells,  
And two French copper coins, ranged there with careful art,  
To comfort his sad heart.”*

The next step was to paint these nosegays, but the lesson was too short for this; and by the following week they were faded or dead, so we had to find a more permanent form for them. There were offers of artificial flowers from home, and I had to bring boxes and boxes to hold the treasures that were turned out for us. Besides flowers, there were ribbon-bows and rosettes, buckles, laces, veils, plumes, pins and pompons, playthings that would appeal to any child, and with them I put gypsophila, statice, and the strawlike helichrysum, oak apples, acorns, bracken, berries and beechnuts, old-man’s-beard and honesty, and even shells and seaweed, pebbles and patterned paper. Everyone helped the child who was in charge by suggesting a touch here and there. And as they watched the building of the picture, one of their own took shape for them. By some happy chance I asked the children to think that they were actually making, not painting, something when they worked. This suggestion and the fact that they were no longer asked to imitate the inimitable magic of a real flower, but to paraphrase freely as they pleased, produced something that lived by its own life, and was humble and sweetly flowerlike in character. The fairy paintings, for so we called them, certainly helped the children to look at real flowers with much more understanding and affection. Their patterns now fascinated them. There were the freckled fritillaries, anemones with their foliage frills around their necks and blue-



## FLOWER PAINTING

black tasselled centres, the ringed auriculas and clipped cornflowers, primrose leaves all quilted, orchids, splashed skeleton leaves and silvered potentillas. They saw, too, the in-between shapes traced by the crossing of leaves and stems, and the pattern made by bare branches against the sky.

We had arrived at a rich and varied technique; brush or pen had taken the place of pencil. The pencil drawings could be rubbed out and titivated, with the result that they were tentative and tedious, whereas the pen drawings grew swiftly and freely as did the flowers themselves. A stilo filled with pale Indian ink was an almost perfect thing to work with: it wrote rather than drew, and, after we had talked of the rising sap in stems, someone suggested beginning at the bottom of the page and working upwards—with the surest and loveliest results (2). If these pen drawings were in waterproof ink, they could be washed in with colour of any kind—paint, dye, stain, or even the brilliant bottled inks so well beloved of children.

In one way or another we managed more or less to make friends with the examination, and got it on our side. I do not think that anything can remove the fundamental objection to every form of art examination; but we must remember that, from the children's point of view, the verdict of an external authority is reassuring, and that the mere fact of succeeding in so important an examination as School Certificate gave the subject and their own abilities a standing in their sight.

# XI

## TEACHERS' CLASSES

ALL through the winter months the Council arranged a programme of lectures, courses, and practical classes for teachers. It was a tribute to these teachers that after a long day's work they would turn out and travel quite a distance in order, one might say, to go to school again. There were, I remember, one thousand five hundred applications for one hundred and fifty places in the first three practical classes which were arranged on what was then, for the want of a better word, called the New Art Teaching; and, though the classes were repeated over and over again, we were never able to accept all who wanted to come. Lantern lectures in large halls which seated several hundred people did much to share and spread the new point of view; but I believe it was in the practice of painting itself that the teachers found most happiness and help. Every year I held at least three of these classes myself. We met five times and worked for two hours or more on each occasion. I gave a lesson just as though I were giving it to children. As many of the teachers had never touched brushes or colours before, their approach was natural and unaffected. They had no tricks of the trade, and nothing to unlearn (10). We had great fun together. In the class for Infant Teachers the first evening was devoted to patterns, generally to Writing Patterns. These showed in one of the simplest of ways what can happen when shapes come together in rhythmic combination. Writing pattern shapes have, as units, hardly more mean-

## TEACHERS' CLASSES

ing than the letters of the alphabet, but when combined they can, so to speak, spell something, as do letters in the language of words. Take the capital V shape. Let it grow in a forward zig-zag, up-down movement. Now vary the size of the up-downs, say one large and deep followed by three slight and shallow. Below, a second row, perhaps a repeat of the first, but upside-down; then a third row that overlaps the second. The fourth row will be a repeat of the second. Even these single strands can be woven in wonderful ways. In class, the shapes so traced with charcoal were filled in with colour. For the tiny shapes some choice spot of colour was always saved so that it should stand out as does the pupil of an eye. It may, indeed, have been black or white. If not, then a specially brilliant note. I asked them to conceive a balanced scheme as containing always something that read as light, something as dark, something as dull, something as bright. You will find this balance borne out everywhere. At home in Oxford a procession of dons in Academic dress is always an unforgettable example; black gowns, there is the dark; white clouds in the sky and often the white surplices of a choir on its way to Chapel, there is the light; softly grey stones, walls, and buildings are the background and make the dull quiet quality; then the brilliant hoods, magenta and scarlet, cerise and blue. And think of gardens: carnations, crimson and ruby, rose and white, with reseda leaves and black-brown soil below; or the very things before me now, the grey shadows the lamp is casting across sheets of white paper on the brightest pink blotting-pad, my black pen and the black writing that it makes.

The second evening we took potato printing, another form of patterning. Here four main opportunities present themselves: the size and shape of the block or stamp itself, the shape of the pattern cut upon its surface, the position in which it is placed, and the colour and tone



## ART AND THE CHILD

of the dye in which it is dipped. You will never guess the possibilities of these things until you play with them yourself. Let us picture a very simple pattern. Cut a potato in half, chop off its rounded sides so that you have a little square chunk, notch two edges and leave the others plain. On the flat face of the block make a cut, just a cross or whatever comes; in section it should be V-shaped. Colour the surface of the block and stamp it on your paper, first one way then another so that the impressions either touch each other, or leave a space between, or actually overlap. The rule to remember for this placing is, together, apart, or superimposed. What you at first produce may be no more than broken bits; but your skill will increase as you see the shapes join up and a rhythm running through the whole (30). See what you can do with this single block.

The third, fourth, and fifth evenings were devoted to pictures. Every time we met we discussed difficulties that I have dealt with on previous pages, and I did my best to answer questions. Many of the questions asked referred to the examples of children's work with which I always lined the walls. The question which recurred again and again was, "What is a picture?"

## XII

### PICTURES

A PICTURE is something seen, not thought about. It must come to us as a visual experience through our eyes. This is why story illustration should seldom be the child's approach to painting. If it is, he is likely just to string out his thoughts across the paper, saying to himself, for example, "Here is Humpty Dumpty sitting on the wall, and here come all the King's horses, and here come all the King's men, and here are all the pieces that could not be put together again." Nor can his picture. The pieces do not belong. Now let us go to work in another way. Say to the children, "Shut your eyes and you will see this. It is a big quiet good-night picture. Mother and Father are sitting by the fire after you and the other children have gone to bed. Father's armchair goes right up to the top of the picture. He is nearly hidden behind his evening paper. He is reading aloud to Mother. She is on the other side, sewing, making something for you. The black thing on the floor between them is the dog Bingo. He is fast asleep. The brightest and the darkest thing in the picture is the fire. It is in the middle. The flames will need all the yellows and reds you can find, and behind them it is nearly black. The lightest thing is the newspaper."

Everything here is addressed to the mind's eye, fused and unified through the affections and in terms of the materials for painting, so that idea and expression shall be one.

Some people seem to believe that only plain colours straight out of

the pot are pretty; but this is not true. When we wash up the palettes after painting I often wish that we could begin again, because I find such precious little bits that I have never seen before, broken whites, blue-blacks, brown-pinks, grey-greens, russet-reds. Here is a picture I wanted to paint because it made me think of all the lovely mixtures that we had left over last Monday, and of ways of working that were new to me. I shall not need a single ready-made colour straight from the pot. I saw a fishmonger's shop. There was a large salmon with silver scales lying on a block of ice. This ice stood in the middle of a marble slab. On this the fishmonger had arranged everything to make a pattern. There were dappled mackerel, plaice with orange spots, sole, haddock and hake, halibut, whiting and cod. Then the special things: fan-shaped scallops, pinky shrimps and prawns, a box of bronze kippers and another of bloaters. I think I shall draw the fish in my dark-blue chalk on grey paper, then I shall use charcoal for the fishmonger who is standing there in his blue-striped apron, facing us and serving some customers who have their backs to us. I like to believe that my picture is on the other side of the paper, and that it will come through when I wet it. I see it so clearly and know it so well that it seems to be there before I begin. I listen and it tells me what to do. The air is always full of pictures. We have only to reach out for them. Try it next time you travel by train.

In the classes for the teachers of Senior children we followed the same programme; but time was reserved for flower painting, still-life, and portraits, as well as pictures and patterns. We were always allowed to employ a model, while the flower painting was inspired by the supply of perfectly lovely specimens sent by the Council's Parks Department.

Great flat boxes arrived containing branches from trees and shrubs.



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Chimonanthus, that tiny Chinese winter-flowering wonder with waxen petals and scent more sweet than syringa. Then the little leafless yellow jasmine. We had witch-hazel and Siberian crab, blackthorn, whitebeam, almond, prunus and palm, forsythia, laurestinus, laburnum, and lilacs.

At our last meeting I always arranged an exhibition of the pictures and patterns that had been produced. Every member of the class was represented, and I think all were surprised and indeed proud. There was something authentic and forthright about it all, so completely different from the conventional cut-outs, stencils, and picture-book illustrations. It was no longer a question of doctrine and debate. What we were doing was its own satisfaction and delight.

These memories would be quite incomplete without some mention of the lectures I gave here and abroad.

In 1934 I received through the Director of the National Gallery of Canada an invitation from the Carnegie Trust to speak to the University Summer Schools of Canada. I counted this as honouring the Council and the teachers whom I served.

The voyage across the Atlantic in the great liner the *Empress of Britain* was to me a new and wonderful experience. I recall most vividly the day when we passed huge emerald icebergs; and then the first sight of the St. Lawrence, and my surprise and pleasure at being greeted at Quebec by the Director's deputy with a telegram of welcome. From there I started on my journey to Ottawa, where I had the pleasure of spending a whole day with the staff of the National Gallery, and of discussing the adventures that lay before me. At 6 o'clock in the evening I set out on the first stage of that long, long train journey, symbolised by the railway ticket which must have measured a foot or more. As on board ship, I travelled in the greatest comfort, with a little

bedroom all to myself, and a perfectly delightful negro attendant who seemed to have nothing to do but chat with me and bring iced grapefruit and all sorts of American delicacies. He was such good company and saw that I missed nothing. There are, of course, as everyone knows, great stretches of country where for hundreds and hundreds of miles one sees nothing at all but small shrub-like trees, and here and there a tiny Indian settlement. And there comes at length the great prairie lands with corn, corn, corn as far as the eye can see. During the night the prairies are left behind and one wakens to find the train winding up among the Rocky Mountains. At times the track is so twisted that one can almost touch the tail of the last carriage.

I broke my journey several times, for I stopped at most of the big cities and spoke to university as well as to public audiences. I was at first almost overwhelmed by the warmth of the welcome I received. The complete strangers with whom I was to stay came to the station bringing bouquets of flowers, and met me as though I were an old friend. Pressmen and photographers were there as well. What were my impressions of Canada? That was always their question. And my answer? The hospitality of the Canadian homes and hearts, the love that everyone had for the old country, and the intense interest taken in everything concerning her, the fact that a link, such as a mutual friend or even a relative, could so often be found, the sunshine, and the shadow shapes it made across open spaces, scattered with strangely coloured leaves, splendid school buildings, huge hotels, hundreds of towers, elevators and escalators, absence of hedges and fences, ice-creams. . . .

At each centre my first task was to visit the Lecture Hall where I was to speak in the evening, and to arrange an exhibition of English children's drawings that I had brought with me. Members of the

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audience, many of whom had travelled great distances, began to arrive long before the time of the lecture, and there were always volunteers to help in putting up the drawings. I remember in Saskatchewan two delightful old nuns with gigantic headdresses, who had travelled fifty miles to hear me. I still can see their bonneted heads as they burrowed in my boxes, and hear their excited exclamations as they showed each other the children's work. It is a wonder that we ever got the exhibition up. Indeed, before we were ready the audience had begun to arrive, and, as so often happened, the interval that I had planned for rest and refreshment was crowded out. How thankful I was that I had a lantern slide of every drawing, so large were the crowds that gathered and so great the eagerness of those who did get a view of the pictures that I fear they forgot the fact that others were seeing nothing at all. It was delightful to speak to such audiences. As the slides came on they stamped, cheered, and clapped like children at a cinema. I think they fell in love with the drawings because they were so natural and spontaneous; and is not this the Canadian character itself? I know that many of the teachers decided there and then that, given permission, they would gladly abandon the formal syllabus of work which hitherto had guided them and trust to the children's natural interests to be the mainspring of their art teaching.

Why should any child wish to draw the watering-can or the coal-scuttle or bathroom tap, when he has within him the power to paint his own mental pictures: of trains and stations, stores and shops, barges, boats and big ships? I believe I am right in thinking that many of those who came to my lectures were working in isolated places, and found in the University Summer Schools one of the few opportunities of coming into contact with pioneer and experimental work that was going on in the towns. Everyone who visits Canada will have seen



## ART AND THE CHILD

the voluntary art classes held in the Galleries and attended by hundreds of children at the week-ends. I had always hoped to return to Canada and revisit these classes myself, for such a happy and vivid impression of them remained in my mind. The next best thing has been to meet Canadian teachers in this country and, from them and from the correspondence of Canadian friends, to learn of the great changes that have taken place in art teaching in the schools. My hope is that the message I had the privilege of bearing as long ago as 1934 played some small part in the birth of this new movement.

As for our work at home, everyone knows that lectures, summer schools, and exhibitions have been the means of sharing experiences and furthering ideas. It has been a source of interest and inspiration to contribute to the work in fields beyond my own.

Before I went to Canada a collection of children's drawings contributed by fifty London schools was shown in the corridors of County Hall. The drawings were framed and hung just where the school prints were usually to be seen. Nor could there have been a happier setting, so many passed that way. And the Press, a large public, and parties of teachers and children came specially to see them and would stay and stay and stay. The children tiptoed, squatted on their heels, wagged their heads, and scuttled up and down, as they discovered and chatterboxed about their own and one another's work. Nothing must be missed. No one gave himself any artistic airs and graces, but their pleasure and pride in finding old familiar friends in such a fine setting was unmistakable. "Oh, look, look, here is Harry's mother and Nancy's house and my little sea picture." And the pioneer teachers, whose light had been hidden, now enjoyed openly their own and each other's success. The candle now burning so brightly was a beacon shared by all.

This was really Dr. Spencer's exhibition. He was the Chief Inspector

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at the time, and as soon as he saw the work we had to show he gave it his blessing. How can I say what this meant to us? The new methods of art teaching were still misunderstood and questioned, even by progressive teachers, and when someone without any special knowledge of art, and Dr. Spencer claimed no such knowledge, decided in favour of them, then all was well. He stood very high indeed in the teachers' affection and esteem, and I am sure that his courageous outspoken support counted as nothing else could have done in these early days. I see him now in the corridors of County Hall on that Monday morning, when the children's drawings were discovered hanging in place of the school pictures and prints. After weeks of preparation, a party of teachers had worked with me all Sunday to spring the surprise. As they came on duty, everybody stopped to look, and the corridor became impassable. Many were merely indignant because they could hardly get along to their rooms, but some were just amused and treated the whole thing as a joke; others, and among them many of my fellow inspectors, were enchanted. Dr. Spencer himself was completely serious, and insisted that others should be the same. I shall not forget his unfailing kindness, his loyalty to me and to every right and enlightened idea.

This holding of educational exhibitions was one means that the Council had of keeping in touch with its teachers and the great general public that it represented.

The Conference Hall was the setting for the more important of these. Teachers, children, parents, public, and Press were brought together and met with the Council members in a way that would otherwise have been impossible. Such exhibitions were a source of inspiration and refreshment, and were the focus for pilgrimages from every part of London and from far afield as well.

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In 1938, feeling that the time was ripe, I asked permission to arrange another exhibition of children's drawings. We were now in a position to stage something really representative in the large Conference Chamber, and were voted a sum of money towards the expenses. But the vote did not mean that the preparation of the Exhibition passed into the hands of paid workers, for the cost of adapting the hall itself used up the whole of the grant. It was well that this was so, for the fun of preparing for the Exhibition brought together in a common purpose a band of enthusiastic volunteers. Night after night we met in our basement headquarters and sorted the drawings that were sent in from the schools. Then came the task of mounting and framing them; and for this we had the choice of an almost unlimited number of fine old frames that we were able to remove from school pictures no longer in circulation. These we painted and decorated to suit each individual drawing. Never were there happier working parties and, when all was ready, six hundred pictures and patterns were waiting to be hung. Every type of school in London was represented, as well as public and private schools elsewhere. What was the purpose of the Exhibition? Certainly not to display the work of specially gifted children. Our intention was to tell the story of an ordinary child's natural artistic development, and to suggest the teacher's share in furthering it.

The Conference Hall with its recessed walls did not at first seem suitable as a gallery, but in the end we found that the fourteen little bays were exactly what we needed; for they allowed of our grouping the work, and so giving a sense of growth from the earliest to the final stages of schooling.

The work of the youngest children, aged 3 to 8, was hung in the first recess, then followed the work of those from 8 to 11, then 11 to 14.



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Making our way round, we find central schools, showing work by those up to the age of 16; secondary schools up to the age of 18, then came special schools, that is schools for handicapped children, private schools, public schools, and finally there was the work of children who were educated at home.

When at last all was ready, Sir Kenneth Clark, Director of the National Gallery, whose advice and encouragement had been an unending source of strength in this enterprise as in many another, officially opened the Exhibition.

Twenty-six thousand people visited the Exhibition during the eight weeks that it was open. All were invited to sign the visitors' book as they left. We were naturally very proud of the many distinguished names that appeared on these pages, and felt it indeed a privilege to have the pleasure of showing them our work. There was something to be learned from everyone, for they were seeing for the first time work so familiar to us. I know how greatly the teachers treasure the memory of having acted as stewards and guides, and of having had the opportunity of these introductions and discussions. The Exhibition had a very wide Press, and had the notice of art critics as well as of reporters. We all enjoyed the game of guessing the identity of our visitors; but there was no question of guessing in the case of the most distinguished of all, for it was the Queen herself, and with her the two Princesses. They set the seal of seriousness and dignity which we hoped had characterised the Exhibition. Naturally my senior colleague and I were honoured at showing them round; but the really lovely thing about the whole occasion was that the Queen's interest and appreciation seemed so genuine and effortless.

It is always a great help to see things in contrast to one another. In the centre of the Exhibition we therefore built a circular stand which

in shape was an inversion of the walls themselves, and here we hung contrasting pairs of drawings, a good and a bad, side by side so that they should speak for themselves. There was a copy of a pretty-pretty little picture, mannered and pretentious, and beside it was placed a large painting of ponies galloping along a field; there was the inevitable herbaceous border and early-Victorian lady in a crinoline, and by that was placed a picture of peasants planting cabbages in a ploughed field; there were little timid, stammering, shaded drawings of boxes and bowler hats and bathroom taps, and by them were large groups of bottles and basins seen in all their shapeliness and beauty.

One wing of this stand showed complete sets of work, forty or more successful interpretations of the same subject. These we included as evidence of the very high level that was possible to a class when the picture had been vividly experienced. They were a challenge to conventional methods of teaching by which a lesson seldom produced more than half a dozen worthwhile drawings. The following is a description of the picture given that produced one of these complete sets of work.

One afternoon in late autumn I went to see two old ladies with whom I had been friendly since I was a child. As they were expecting me, I knew that the front door would be left open for me to walk in without knocking. Both of them were a little deaf, and before they realised that I was there I had time to stand at the sitting-room door and see them as a subject for a picture. The central shape is the window, an oblong through which the sky, a smoky shade of grey, can be seen. In the middle stands a small table, and on either side of it the old ladies sit facing one another. Their heads reach nearly to the top of my eyeful or picture frame. I do not see more than half the window. The curtains, which are lace, make a sort of snowflake pattern across

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the panes of glass. They are looped back, and between them hangs a birdcage; but the little golden gate is open and the bird sits gaily outside on top. I am very near to the old ladies and they look very large. Do you see them? They are against the light which makes them seem almost black, though really one is dressed in brown and the other is wearing a purply plaid. The younger Miss Smith is reading aloud, holding the book up high and turning to catch the last of the daylight. Her sister is knitting a brightly coloured scarf. In her lap a big black-and-white cat is asleep. On the table stands a precious plant in a pot; I think it is a petunia. Its flowers are trumpet-shaped. The leaves spread out and make a lovely pattern. In front of the window all the shapes are big and bold and near to one another. There seems to be nothing scattered and separate. Can I see the floor? Only a little of it, and this is covered with a patterned carpet.

I never had the least reason for thinking that any child was ever spoilt on account of her picture being shown in an exhibition, but I am certain that many, especially the older, were reassured and encouraged, both by seeing their work suitably framed and shown and discovering that it was worthy of interest to an outside world, and even actually approved by professional art critics.

It was often necessary for me to be the last one on duty in the Exhibition at night, and I still remember how certain of the drawings would seem to step from their frames and speak to me. You have to look a very, very long time before you can understand, or come to the end of, what a good drawing contains; but if you look long enough and lovingly enough everything that has gone into it will 'reach you, and the good will drive out the bad.

It is difficult at this distance to give any sense of what this Exhibition meant to us at the time. It was the symbol of swiftly changing, forward-



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looking thought that stirred the teachers as they discovered the ever-widening artistic powers of their pupils, and it radiated the happiness that the children had experienced in being allowed the freedom to paint under sympathetic and enlightened guidance.

7.45 p.m., August 20th, 1938.

The last visitor left the Exhibition at 6.30 and I stayed on for an hour. The Conference Hall was absolutely silent, and the half-minute click of the electric clock, which I had never even heard before, sounded like someone hammering. It was lovely that my good-bye should be without any sense of hurry. The drawings were, I thanked Heaven, as good as I had thought they were. How little the children know, and how right they are! Before leaving I took a last look round, and remembered all our early struggles to get things into shape. I saw almost to my surprise that there need be no regret. All things had worked together for good in spite of wanderings and wildernesses. Even the square of trellis which held the centre piece was right to be square. And how earnestly I had fought to get it hexagonal! Only now did I realise that it would have ruined the middle to have it so.

Pictures are strange things to be with when it is getting dark; and six hundred of them had a great power. They shone. I felt that if I could have stayed looking at them all night I might, possibly, have understood just what it is that goes into a drawing when it is made, and lives in it for ever and ever while paint and paper remain; but I had promised to be home by 8.30, and somehow I felt that I was leaving nothing behind; so I ran round switching out the lights and not once looking back. The future beckoned, the way was clear, the Exhibition had closed, and I was happy when I had expected that I should be sad.

## XIII

### “EVACUATION”

WHAT could we expect of art education during the war? My own share in it was, alas, a small one; but, before I was obliged through illness to drop out of the work, I had the happiness of seeing that neither “things present nor things to come” could seriously discourage the new spirit that animated art teaching. The story of the transfer of thousands of London children from their own to country homes or schools is too well known to need retelling here. We all remember the uncertainty and apprehension of the spring and summer of 1939. The endless plannings and precautions, the sudden white-washing of kerbs, the constant coming and going of officials, the telephone calls, the detailed emergency duties, the gathering of gloom, the storm clouds, and then at last the great crash. A few days before, I had been recalled from Switzerland, where I had been seeing the superb Spanish pictures, but I was home in time to take my place.

There is no one for whom that 3rd of September, for one reason or another, is not a never-to-be-forgotten day. I spent it standing on a soap-box, from which I surveyed a stream of school children. I do not now remember the details of the ritual of departure. I see a never-ending procession of big red buses which brought the children to the station; this was at the top of a little incline. I see the thousands of appealing, upturned faces; I see the labels, the banners, the bundles, and the good-bye oranges and bananas. And the sounds—I seem to

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remember that everything was strangely silent, perhaps because it was Sunday. Even the trains steamed in and out of the station as though they knew their secret. The children were simply splendid. Nobody cried, only one felt sick, but wasn't. I saw them go, but not arrive. But in the months that followed I saw these transplanted seedlings settle into the new soil. What could we expect of art education during the war? I was for a time too busily engaged in helping to smooth out evacuation difficulties in Oxfordshire to think about anything else. But at last the pieces of the puzzle were put together, and we could begin painting. Materials were scarce; but we made shift somehow, and before a year was up really good work was going on, and at least one school held an exhibition that would have done any of us proud in the best of our London days.

The London children certainly won their way to the hearts of their Oxford foster-parents. They were received into every kind of home, and on the round of visits I made in the evening I saw striking contrasts; but the children were happy, whether dining with dons who wore evening dress or eating fish and chips in a kitchen.

This made it all the sadder when we had sometimes to see the children's own parents come to take them back to London. As the buses drove away, the foster-mothers would run alongside, the tears streaming down their faces.

I have written this brief record in gratitude to those who worked with me, and to the children who, in learning, taught as well. My hope is that it may be of some small help to those who are so splendidly carrying on the work. How shall I say "Good-bye"? Over and over again my story returns to the fact that children visualise naturally. They bring this precious gift, perhaps the subtlest and most delicate part of their spiritual endowment, and offer it to us whenever we teach



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art. Without it we should indeed be helpless; for the truth is that art cannot be taught, but in sympathy it can be shared. I see pictures. Will you show me how to paint them? It is this that they are saying. It is as though they knew that these mental images may die, like empty day-dreams, or live as joyful expression. No flower can more sweetly unfold or more sadly shrivel. With infinite care, then, and humility, we shall set about our task of art teaching. Shall we rehearse some of our tenets? Before everything else, let us preserve and indeed increase the children's love of painting and enjoyment of their lessons.

Let us remember that there are two chief opportunities. We have to train the mind's eye to see steadily and in terms of shape. An image seen in a flash may sometimes be so bright that it can be recalled and painted without question, just as a thought may sometimes find the very words it wants. But generally we can do much to help in clarifying and recapturing the vision, and by leading the child up to a place from which he can watch it.

Then the painter's technique must be taught. The happiest thing is when the means, the manner of expression, are born with the idea; but a child must be aware of the rich possibilities of the means. Let us teach him to discover all he can about materials, and make the very handling of them an interest and a delight. And what is the *use* of it all? I cannot find an answer to this, nor need we try. But the good of it? Yes. Anyone who will give children the spiritual freedom in which to paint will find in it a thing to be esteemed for its own sake, a thing that is outside and above all would-be workaday worthwhileness. The child artist is disinterested, serene, and fulfilled.

One of my greatest rewards has been that teachers, some of whom felt that they had little left to give, have found fresh fervour and re-

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assurance in taking up this new-old work. With renewed faith they have been the means of reviving spiritual values, and in doing so they have brought about a renaissance in their schools. Unconsciously they have accepted the appeal to all that is generous and gracious in themselves, all that is sweet and sincere in the children.

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2	Plant Drawing (pen and wash)	<i>Nancy Prudence</i> 12
3	Figure Drawing (brush)	<i>Helena Tresham</i> 15
4	Jar (pencil and sepia wash)	<i>Marion Richardson</i> 8
5	Fish and Chips	<i>Winifred Hudson</i> 15
6	Pick-a-back (brush drawing)	<i>Lesley Gray</i> 15
7	Girl with Lighted Candle	<i>Joan Duncan</i> 15
8	Mother and Father (pen drawings)	<i>Rose Rollason</i> 12
9	Cats	<i>Muriel Lees</i> 12
10	The Audience	<i>Uninstructed teacher</i>
11	Still Life with Bowls	<i>R. Kemsley</i> 13
12	Maid Marian Fabric (potato-block print reproduced by machine)	
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14	Serving-Maid	<i>Velasquez</i>
15	Serving-Maid after Velasquez	<i>Teacher</i>
16	Serving-Maid after Velasquez	<i>Florrie Howell</i> 13
17	Flooded Meadows	<i>Jeremy Boswell</i> 13
18	Lady Ill in Bed	<i>Ivy Marskell</i> 13
19	Circus	<i>Elizabeth Kitchin</i> 8
20	Storm	<i>L. Gilbert</i> 15
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22	Horses in a Muddy Field	<i>John Cameron</i>	11
23	Going for a Walk	<i>Myrtle Grimes</i>	9
24	Riders by the Sea (paper-cut)	<i>Magda Clarke</i>	15
25	Still Life (pastel)	<i>Nancy Ewart</i>	17
26	Little Fruit Shop	<i>Marjorie Burchill</i>	12
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## PLATES







PLATE 2



Goats Beard.





Helena Tresham  
Age 15  
June. 27. 1936.









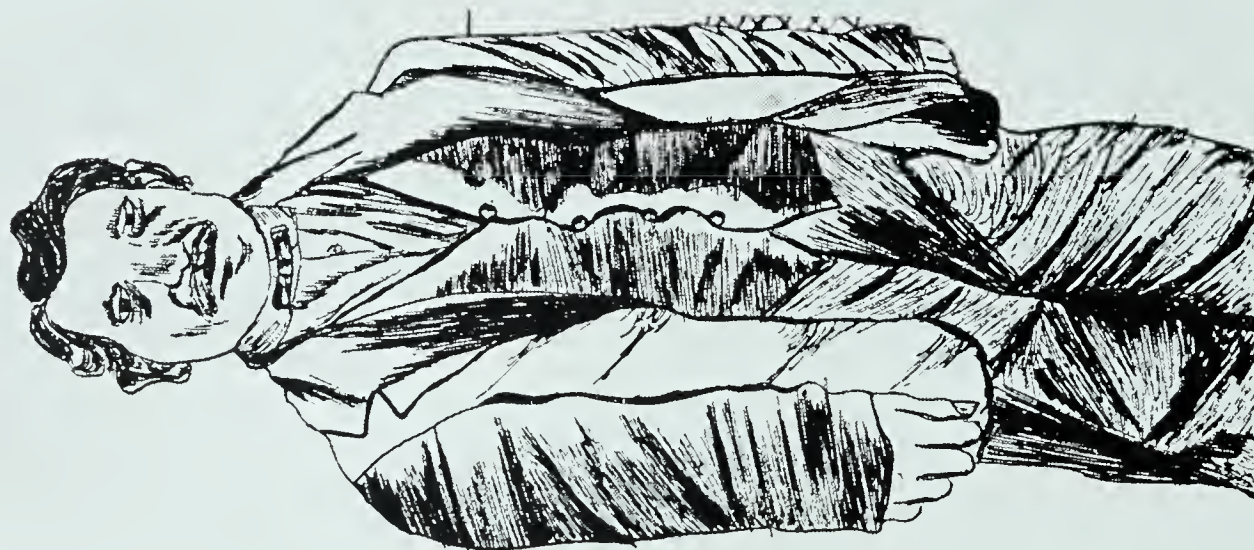
























































































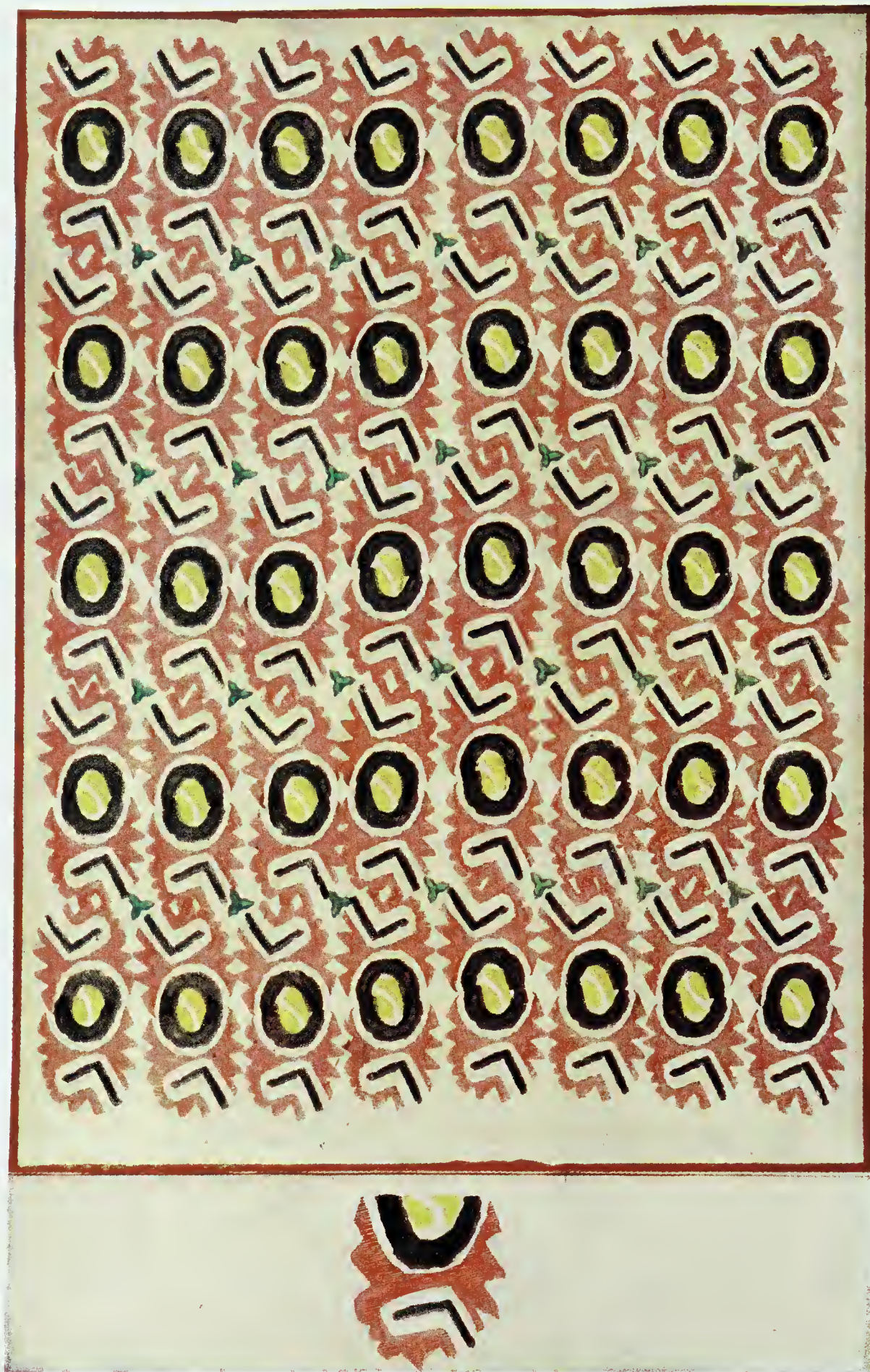






















































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